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EXAMINATION

Of a late

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

To a larger Work designed hereafter to be published concerning the miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, from the earliest Ages through several successive Centuries; tending to shew, that we have no sufficient Reason to believe, upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers, that any such Powers were continued to the Church after the Days of the Apostles;

CONTAINING

A Confutation of the Principles of the said INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

ΑΥΚΟΥΡΤΟΣ ΕΝΤΕΙΝΑΕ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΘΙΕΕ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ ΠΑΝΤΙ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΗ ΚΑΘΑΠΕΡ ΝΟΜΟΘΕΤΗ ΠΕΙΘΟΜΕΝΟΥΣ ΔΙΑΤΕΛΕΙΝ. Plutarchus in Tract. An Seni sit gerenda Respublica.

By THOMAS COMBER, A. B.
Late of JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

L O N D O N :

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The Editions of the Fathers cited in
this Work are as follow.

<i>Tertullian</i>	—	—	<i>Lutet. Paris.</i>	1664
<i>St. Cyprian</i>	—	—	<i>Genev.</i>	1593
<i>Eusebius</i>	—	—	<i>Colon.</i>	1612
<i>St. Chrysostom</i>	—	—	<i>Eton.</i>	1612
<i>St. Jerom</i>	—	—	<i>Paris.</i>	1579
<i>St. Austin</i>	—	—	<i>Venet.</i>	1551



A N

EXAMINATION, &c.

VERY lately I met with a small Pamphlet, intitled, “ *An Introductory Discourse to a larger Work designed hereafter to be published concerning the miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church from the earliest Ages through several successive Centuries ; tending to shew, that we have no sufficient Reason to believe, upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers, that any such Powers were continued to the Church after the Days of the Apostles.*”

As this Discourse seemed to have some Relation to the Controversy in which I am engaged with Mr. *W.* I set myself about the Consideration of it ; and with that Impartiality and Attention which become an Enquirer after Truth. I own it is natural to suspect the Impartiality of a Person who reads a Discourse appearing favourable to the *Hypothesis* which he opposes : And perhaps the best Men may be deceived in the Opinion which they entertain of their own Impartiality at such a Season. Yet when my Reader reflects upon what immediately ap-

peared to me, that if the Anonymous Author of the *Introductory Discourse* fully proves his Point, my main Argument against Mr. *W.* is no wise affected ; He may be inclined to entertain a more favourable Opinion of my Impartiality in the Examination of the above-mentioned Discourse.

For if it be fully proved, that no Miraculous Powers were continued to the Church after the Days of the Apostles ; then it *only* follows, that I paid a greater Regard than I ought to have done, to the Authority of the Fathers—And in Excuse of this Error, I may be allowed to plead the Examples of the Generality of Protestant Divines ; whose Abilities and Sincerity the Anonymous Writer will not, I hope, impeach.

That my main Argument against Mr. *W.* is not weakened by this *Hypothesis* of the Anonymous Author, is evident : Nay, on the contrary, it will appear that this *Hypothesis* must be grounded on the Supposition that the Veneration of Heathens for Miracle, which I defend, is true. 'Tis allowed, that on a Proof of the Truth of this *Hypothesis*, I cannot urge the Transactions which relate to the *Shower on the Armies of the Emperor Aurelius and his Enemies ; the Appearance of the Cross of Light to Constantine ; and again at Jerusalem in the Reign of Constantius ; nor the Silence of Apollo's Oracle at Antioch, and the Burning his Temple ; nor, in the last Place, the Interruption of the Rebuilding Jerusalem ;* in the Manner which I have done. I cannot urge them to the Readers as Proofs of the good Reception of Christian Miracles among Heathens : Yet, since Mr. *W.* has allowed the last-mentioned Transaction to be a Miracle on the Authority of the Fathers ; unless he can shew the Authority, on which the other Accounts are given, not to be equal to the Authority of this single one, he cannot consistently deny them.

However,

However, should he retract his Assertion with regard to this Transaction, and pretend so to do on the Conviction which the Anonymous Author affords, that no miraculous Powers continued in the Church, after the Times of the Apostles : — Then he must give up the Authority of *Marcellinus* as a Despiser of Miracles, (an Authority which he seems much to value ;) because * the Proof of his despising Miracles, depends entirely on the Reality of a miraculous Power in the Interruption of the Rebuilding *Jerusalem* ; and this Power cannot be proved, but on the Authority of the Fathers. And then the Dispute between Mr. *W.* and myself, about the Matter of Fact, *viz. Whether Heathens did actually reject Christian Miracles with Contempt*, must be confined to the Times of the Apostles. And I am ready to join Issue on this Point : For the only Reason why I added an Examination of the Reception which the five above-mentioned Miracles met with in the Heathen World, was, that I might not seem to distrust the Evidence which would arise from the Writings of the Fathers with regard to the Point in Dispute ; when I found that there was the same Appearance of good Reception of Miracles in the Heathen World during the Ages which followed that of the Apostles, as in the Age of the Apostles themselves.

As it often happens that the Arguments and Suppositions of the Enemies of Truth, afford Arguments for it : — So does it appear remarkably in the present Case : For if Mr. *W.* supposes, with the Anonymous Writer, that all the Accounts of Miracles in Ages after that of the Apostles, were Forgeries, he must retract his main Assertion, that Heathens despised Miracles in general, and the Christian in particular. I shall give Instances.

* See the *Enquiry*, &c. p. 4

with regard to two or three of the first of those, which I have examined in the foregoing Work.

Tertullian, in an Apology presented to the Heads of the Heathen World, insists upon a Record supposed to be made by an Heathen Emperor about twenty Years before in Favour of Christians, on Account of a signal Miracle in his Favour obtained by the Prayers of Christians. Now on a Supposition that this was a Forgery of his own, we must suppose that he was firmly convinced of the Veneration which Heathens paid to Miracles. Or else he must suppose, that the Circumstances of the Relation would have induced the Heathens whom he address'd, immediately to explode the whole Account, and to repulse its Author with Contempt. If they had despised Miracles on the settled Principles of Heathenism, they must have been persuaded, that an Heathen, so much improved by Philosophy as the Emperor *Aurelius*, would give no Regard to any Pretensions to Miracle by Christians, how specious soever. And as it appears that *Tertullian* must have been *convinced* of this Veneration of the Heathens for Miracle, if he forged this Account; so it appears likewise, that he could not be *deceived*. He was too well acquainted with the Principles of Heathens, himself having long been one, not to know whether they were inclined by settled Principles to disregard Miracles. In the last Place, if this Account was a Forgery, it was certainly a Forgery of *Tertullian's*. For had the Account been given him by any one who had himself forged it, or received it from those who did, *Tertullian* was too well acquainted with the *Roman* Laws, particularly with such as any wise related to the Religion which he had now profess'd, to be deceived in this Point. At least, before he inserted a Matter of so much Consequence in his *Apology*, which was a fair and much-improved Copy of his
Address

Address to the Gentiles; he would have enquired after the Record, and finding no such, must, to all Intents and Purposes, have made the Forgery his own. So that upon the Whole it appears, that if the Account of the Shower obtained for the Emperor *Aurelius*, by the Prayers of the Christians, was a Forgery, it was a Forgery which *Tertullian* very well knew. And he cannot be supposed to propose it to the Heads of the Heathen World in the Manner which he did, but on a Supposition that they were inclined to reverence Miracles.

Again; When *Eusebius* wrote the Account of the Appearance of a Cross of Light to *Constantine*, there was *no inconsiderable* Number of Heathens in the World. And it cannot be supposed that the Father was unacquainted with the Spirit of Raillery in this People, or so insensible of its evil Effects, as not to avoid in any Forgery which he thought fit to make, all flagrant Circumstances which might render the whole Account incredible to Heathens. Now it is evident, that the Circumstance of all *Constantine's* Soldiers being much alarmed by the Appearance of the Cross, must render the whole Account *incredible* to Heathens, on a Supposition that they despised Miracles: And not only *incredible*, but *ridiculous* also. For it cannot be disputed that great Numbers of Heathens were in *Constantine's* Army; and therefore the Supposal of their being much affected by the Appearance of Light in the Form of a Cross, must have made the whole Account ridiculous to the Heathens, if they despised Miracles; and *Eusebius* cannot be supposed so ignorant of their Principles, as not to know that it would prove so. Had Heathens therefore despised Miracles, and *Eusebius* forged this History, we must suppose that he would have represented the Cross to have appeared to *Constantine*, either when he was *alone*, or encompass'd with Persons
who

who were *not Heathens* ; or at least would not have represented the *whole Numbers* of Heathens present, to have revered the Appearance. Besides, if any of the Heathens in *Constantine's* Army, when this Appearance was supposed to happen, *viz.* just before he took the Cross for his Standard, were alive when *Eusebius* wrote this Account, as it is not improbable that there might ;—the Father with high Imprudence appealed to these Persons as competent Witnesses of the Truth of a Transaction which he knew to be a mere Forgery.—With high Imprudence, I say, did *Eusebius* appeal to these Persons, if he was not convinced that the Veneration which Heathens in general bore to Miracles, would over-balance any Declarations which these particular Persons might make, in Opposition to his Assertions *.

* It must be confess'd that there is some Intricacy in this Argument. Yet the intelligent Reader will immediately perceive that this Intricacy arises from the Unreasonableness of the Supposition which is here allowed merely for the Sake of seeing what Consequences follow. It is highly unreasonable to suppose that *Eusebius* would forge the Account of the Appearance of the Cross. Yet if he did forge it, he cannot be supposed so ignorant or so inattentive in an Affair of this Consequence as not to perceive, that some of those Persons whom he supposed Witnesses of the Appearance, namely, the Heathen Soldiers in *Constantine's* Army, might be alive when he publish'd this Account, and might declare that it was false. Now as he must be supposed to see this Objection to the naming these Witnesses, it cannot reasonably be thought that he would have named them, had he not likewise perceived a Means of avoiding the Force of this Objection : Namely, that the Generality of Heathens had so great a Veneration for every Thing Miraculous, that they would believe this Account of *Eusebius's*, even though some of those Persons who could prove themselves to have been in *Constantine's* Army, and to have waited upon him when he took the Ensign of the Cross, should declare that no such Appearance was seen by the Army : That is, the high Veneration of Heathens in general to Miracle would incline them rather to believe *Eusebius* in Favour of the Miracle, than their Brother Heathens against it. I have express'd this Argument in different Words here from those of the Text, that it may be more easily comprehended.

In the last Place, no sufficient Motive to engage *Eusebius* in the Forgery can be supposed, but the Hopes of converting great Numbers of Heathens to Christianity. For the Ignominy of the Cross was sufficiently overcome by the Splendor with which *Constantine* had encompass'd it ;—and the Practice of adoring it, had not yet a Birth—So that it cannot be supposed that *Eusebius* forged the Account for either of these Ends. And if it was forged for the Conversion of Heathens, an high Regard for Miracles must be supposed *settled* in the Minds of them, or that *Eusebius* was unacquainted with their main Principles. But this latter Supposition is extremely improbable.

Again, 'Tis evident from *Cyril's* Epistle to *Constantius*, that he would apply the Appearance of the Cross of Light at *Jerusalem*, to *confirm* the Emperour in Christianity, and that he had no Intention that the Epistle should be kept a Secret. Now if the Heathens rejected Christian Miracles on settled Principles, which made them reject with high Contempt Miracles in general, *Constantius* must be acquainted with this remarkable Point. And then *Cyril's* Account, that all the Heathens at *Jerusalem* joined with Christians in adoring our Lord, because of the Appearance of the Cross, must render the whole Relation suspected as an ill-concerted Forgery ; since it carried these flagrant Signs of Imposture. Nor can we suppose that *Cyril* could be ignorant of this Principle of Heathenism. It appears then that on a Supposition of *Cyril's* having forged the Account, he must have been convinced on good Grounds, of the Veneration of Heathens for Miracles ; or he would not have committed the Forgery in this Manner. The intelligent Reader will apply this Method of Reasoning to other Instances.

However, though the *Hypothesis* of this anonymous Writer does no wise oppose my main Argument urged against Mr. *W.*

I must confess that all his Arguments to establish his *Hypothesis*, appear intirely inconclusive, and many of them quite destitute even of an Appearance of Probability. All his Illustrations also appear perfectly impertinent to the Point to which they are applied ;—and many strong Reasons may be assigned why Miracles must be supposed to have subsisted among Christians after the Times of the Apostles. The End also which is proposed by this anonymous Writer cannot, in all Probability, be obtained ; and the Principles on which this *Hypothesis* is built, would support an universal Scepticism in Matters related by Historians.

The End publicly proposed by this anonymous *Hypothesis*-Builder, is to destroy one of the most powerful Arguments of the Roman Missionaries in England, viz. * “ *Their confident Attestation of Miracles as subsisting still in their Church ; and the clear Succession of them, which they deduce through all History from the Apostolic Times down to our own.* ”

As to the Confidence of the Romanists’ Assertions, that they have Miracles daily performed among them, it must be allowed *very great* ; but as to the *Clearness of the Deduction* of this Series of Miracles from the Apostles’ Times to our own, it must be maintain’d by every impartial Person to be *none at all*. In order clearly to deduce this Succession, surely it is not sufficient to shew that Miracles have been recorded in later as well as earlier Ages. It is necessary to shew that these Miracles in later Ages have been recorded with Circumstances of equal Probability, as in the earlier. But to this clear Deduction the *Romanists* have not the least Pretence.

Whoever therefore is strongly affected by the mere Confidence of the Assertions of Papists on this Subject, must be a Person

who has imbibed so strong Prejudices in favour of Miracles and the primitive Ages, that it cannot be supposed anywise probable that he will pay any Attention to a Person who professes to teach him, that no miraculous Powers ever subsisted in the Church since the Apostles' Times.

The effectual Methods to obviate this most powerful Argument of the *Romish* Missionaries in *England*, and to destroy their Success, are such as here follow.

First, To shew the Protestants, who are likely to be deluded by these *Romanists*, that the Accounts, which the Popish Writers give of their most celebrated Miracles, are often the most ridiculous imaginable: Inasmuch that it cannot be supposed, by any Person of common Sense, that a God of all Perfection would interpose his Divine Power in such *ridiculous* Transactions, for such *mean* Ends as are sometimes supposed to be pursued and obtained by these Miracles.

Secondly, To shew them that some of these Miracles, which yet are related upon as good Authority as many of the rest, are absurd and contradictory. And therefore since they *cannot* be true, the others, which rest upon the *same* Authority, may justly be supposed *equally false*.

Thirdly, That the Circumstances of their Performance, such as Time, Place, and Persons concerned, are exactly such as suit Forgeries, but by no means such as would be chose for the Performance of Miracles, if the Persons concerned were conscious of a Divine Power attending them.

Fourthly, That no Credit can be given to Popish Miracles on account of the Declarations upon Oath of the Persons concerned; because it is well known that the Members of that Church are taught, that the prosecuting good Ends by evil Means, is not only *pardonable* but *meritorious*. And among the

best Works they reckon the promoting the Interests and Honour of Mother Church.

Fifthly, That the Love of Gain, which appears to have swayed the Leaders of the *Romish* Church for many Ages in all other Instances of their Conduct, may reasonably be supposed to influence them to forge Miracles, and may prevail with the Country all around to keep the Secret; and the Terrors with which the Priests address the Vulgar, may be supposed to keep others from a Discovery, who are not influenced by Hopes of Gain.

Sixthly, To shew that many of their most celebrated Marts of Miracles have been found only Dens of Imposture: Particularly, at the Reformation, as the anonymous Author himself observes. And to appeal to the Testimony of *English* Gentlemen of undoubted Credit, especially of the Laity, who have travelled into Popish Countries, and seen *many* of those Contrivances, which afford strong Suspicions that *all* their Miracles are Imposture.

Lastly, To insist strongly on this plain Truth; that altho' the Church of *Rome* could prove in the most evident Manner a Power of Miracles, yet it would not thence follow that their Doctrines were approved by God; because many of the Popish Doctrines *most evidently and directly* contradict Reason and the Senses, and the plainest Dictates of the Word of God as well as unassisted Reason; and real Miracles may be the Effects of Devils, when God pleases to remit that Restraint under which he generally confines them.

These Methods, properly pursued, must be much more effectual to guard the Generality of Protestants against the Attacks of the *Romish* Missionaries, than any laborious and perplexing Inquiries into the Characters, Designs, Tempers, Learning, Judgment, Credulity, &c. of the primitive Fathers; as
also

also into all the Circumstances of the Miracles related by them; the Nature of the Miracles themselves; the Ends for which they are supposed to be wrought, and the Doctrines with which they seem connected; as also in what Degree those Doctrines were then inculcated; whether *as prudential*, or *necessary*. And yet all these Inquiries must be pursued with the greatest Exactness by those who pretend to determine that at such an Age Miracles ceased.

In short, if the Anonymous Writer's *Hypothesis* be true, it can be proved so to very few Persons in comparison of the Generality of Protestants in *England*:—Because it requires a most extensive Knowledge of the Writings of the Fathers; a much greater, as we shall see, than the Anonymous Writer seems possess'd of. And Persons who are possess'd of this extensive Knowledge, and of Judgment how to apply it, (without which they cannot properly determine about the Foundation of the *Hypothesis*,) must be supposed sufficiently prepared by other Arguments to repulse any Attack which the *Papists* can make from the Province of Miracles. So that, upon the whole, this *Hypothesis* is not likely to oppose *in any Measure* the successful Attempts of Missionaries in *England*. And it will appear in the Sequel, that it *may*, or rather in all Probability *must* have some fatal Consequences.

Our Anonymous Author has given us one Instance of the Success of the *Romanists* in perverting *English* Protestants by the confident Attestation of Miracles. An *English* Deserter in *Flanders* turned Papist, because a grave, civil Priest assured him, that the consecrated Wafer in a Protestant's Pocket was converted into Flesh; and he supposed *—“ *that there was no Reason to imagine that a Person of so reverend a Character could have any Design or Interest to deceive him in the Attestation* “ of

* P. 5. Not. a,

“ of such a Miracle.” Now it appears from the Account, that the *Popish* Priest did not attempt to prove to the poor deluded Soldier that there was a clear Deduction of Miracles in the *Romish* Church from the Times of the Apostles to these Days : He very well knew, that such an Argument could not be made any wise affecting to the poor Defenter. He only insisted upon the Power which the *Romanists in these Days* possess. And surely, if the Clergyman, who attended this poor deluded Creature when he came to die, had any Judgment, he would pursue much the same Method which the *Popish* Priest found successful, and not that which the Anonymous Writer prescribes. Had the Protestant Minister laid open the Arguments urged in that Introductory Discourse, he would not probably have finished before the Hour of the Criminal’s Execution came. But if he insisted only upon *one Point*, as the *Popish* Priest had done, the single Miracle by which the poor Soldier was deceived, he might hope to convince him that the Miracle was not so well attested, as he at first apprehended : He might reasonably hope to convince him, that the *Popish* Priest had *great Interest* in drawing him from his Religion, and at the same Time from his Allegiance to his earthly Prince.

Before I enter upon the Examination of the Anonymous Writer’s Arguments, which are designed *directly* to prove, that Miracles ceased with the Apostles ; I would observe, that any Objections which may be made ever so justly, with regard to the Attempts of Protestant Writers, to settle the Time after the Age of the Apostles, when miraculous Powers ceas’d, cannot afford any *good* Proof, no nor any *reasonable* Suspicion that they ceas’d with the Apostles. For the disputing about a Thing, or using bad Arguments to prove its Existence, is no Sort of Proof that it never had an Existence.

And

And I shall endeavour to maintain this Position, that, *After the Times of the Apostles, when any considerable Number of Infidels, or even one distinguished Infidel, was to be converted to Christianity, or confounded in the Persecution of it, or any other important Point with regard to Christianity was to be established; God may reasonably be supposed to have immediately interposed a divine Power; and if there be nothing absurd or ridiculous in the Relation; if the Credit of the Relator be in general good; if it does not appear from his profess'd Principles that he would deceive, and he declares that he had actual Knowledge of the Fact by his own Senses, or the Information of those who had, and who appear creditable, it is as unreasonable to deny a Miracle on this Evidence, as it would be to deny a natural Event.*

It is apparently absurd for a Man of the greatest natural and improved Abilities, to pretend to determine, that at such an Aera after the Times of the Apostles, miraculous Powers entirely and finally ceased in the Church, unless he have an immediate Revelation from God: Because such a Determination goes upon this Ground, that after such a Time no Event could deserve the immediate Interposition of the Deity. And he who assumes such a Knowledge, makes himself of *the Council of God*. All that a rational Man dares assert on this Subject must be, that after such an Aera no Miracle, recorded in History, appears to be properly attested. And no Wonder, that since the Circumstances of Credibility, which are to be considered with regard to any Relation of a Miracle, are very many, and of different Kinds, good Men should determine variously concerning the same Relation. So that the different Aera's which Protestant Divines have fixed for the Ceasing of Miracles, are so far from affording any Proof that Miracles ceased *before any* of these Aera's, that on a Supposition that Miracles continued *beyond any*

any of them ; these different Aera's must have been fixed by different Men, who considered in different Lights, and with different Degrees of Attention, the Motives of Credibility which inforce the Belief of particular Miracles.

It is, however, highly unreasonable to confine the miraculous Powers to the Times before *Constantine's* Establishing Christianity, as *Dr. Marshal* seems to do ; as he is cited by our Anonymous Author. For the Reasons which he assigns, why miraculous Powers ceased upon *Constantine's* Establishment, proves, that they should have subsisted in the next Age. “ * *When Christianity* (says he) *had acquired the Support of human Powers, those extraordinary Assistances were discontinued.*” But if Christianity had miraculous Powers because it wanted them, when it had not yet acquired the Support of human Powers ; it must be supposed to have *regained* the former, when it *lost* the latter, that is, in *Julian's* Time.

Dr. Tillotson seems to have entertained a much juster Notion of miraculous Powers : For (as he is represented also by the Anonymous Writer) he presumes not to determine *precisely* the Time when miraculous Powers ceased in the Church ; but he supposes, that in general they continued as long as Paganism made any considerable Opposition to Christianity. Speaking of the Gift of casting out Devils, he says, “ † *It continued the longest of any, and there was Reason that it should continue as long as the Devil reigned, and Pagan Idolatry was kept up. But when the Powers of the World became Christian, and Satan's Kingdom was EVERY WHERE destroyed, then this miraculous Gift also ceased, there being no farther Occasion for it.*”

* Epist. Cyp. VII. Not. 6. † Vol. 3. p. 488.

Much to the same Purpose does that learned and judicious Inquirer into primitive Christianity Dr. Cave, express himself on this Subject. “ * God (says he) never totally withdrew the
 “ Power of working Miracles, from the Church, till the World
 “ was in a Manner wholly subdued to the Faith of Christ. And
 “ then he left it to be conducted by more human and regular
 “ Ways, and to preserve its Authority over the Minds of Men,
 “ by those standing and innate Characters of Divinity, which he
 “ has impressed upon it.”

The Anonymous Author, however, having shewn that Mr. Dodwell. Mr. Whiston, Dr. Waterland, Dr. Chapman, and Dr. Berriman, extend the Subsistence of miraculous Powers in the Church to the Fourth and Fifth Centuries, reproaches them in the following Oratoric Strain : “ † These eminent Divines —
 “ seem unwarily to have betrayed the Protestant Cause, by transferring the miraculous Powers of the Church, the pretended
 “ Insigns of Truth and Orthodoxy, into the Hands of its Enemies,
 “ and yielding up this sacred Depositum; like the old Ancilia
 “ of Pagan Rome, to the Defence and Support of Popish
 “ Rome.”

But however Oratoric this Reproach may be, it cannot much boast of Reason, till it appears, that the Miracles in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries, which these Reverend Doctors defend, were really no more *supernatural* than the old *Ancilia* ; and that these are *effectually* given up to the *Romanists*, so that they can rightly apply them to establish their Corruptions. Till these two important Points are proved, our Anonymous Author should have forbore the Severity of his Oratoric Reproaches : He should not have triumphed before the Victory. However, he assigns in general the Grounds of this severe Reproach.

* Life S. Stephen. C. XXX.

† P. 11.

† “ *It was (says he) in these very primitive Ages, and especially in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Centuries, in which the chief Corruptions of Popery were introduced, or the Seeds of them so effectually sown, that they could not fail of producing the Fruits which we now see.*

I shall first consider the Miracles as not particularly relating to these Corruptions of which the Anonymous Writer complains; and examine what Probability there is that God might perform such.

Corruptions in Belief and Practice crept into the Church in the early Ages. These could not be prevented, while Men are subject to so many Prejudices and Ignorances, unless God should absolutely over-rule the Course of Nature by a perpetual Miracle, which our Anonymous Writer will not contend for; because then he must suppose it necessary in the Ages after the Apostles, when he supposes that there were *no Miracles*, and consequently *none necessary*. Yet though these Corruptions were introduced into the Church, the main Truths of Christianity were preserved; and these great Truths wanted the Confirmation of Miracles, on account of the great Numbers of Heathens who remained unconverted. And I hope to evince in the last Part of *the Heathen Rejection of Christianity in the first Ages, considered*; that the Prejudices, which Heathens originally entertained against the Doctrines of Christianity, both practical and speculative, were so violent and numerous, and so much increased by Accidents, such as the Persecution of Christians, the Calumnies of their Enemies, &c. that it must be a *moral Impossibility* to convert any *considerable* Number of Heathens without Miracles. Now when it appears that Christianity could not be propagated after the Death of the Apostles, but by Mi-

† Ibid.

racles,

acles, the Question is, Whether it was more agreeable to the Goodness of God to leave the Christian Cause quite destitute of supernatural Aid, without which it could not subsist, on Account of some Corruptions which could not be warded against but by a perpetual miraculous Power over-ruling the Minds of Men; or to spread the Christian Banner through the World, notwithstanding some slight Stains which it had contracted, and which it was not agreeable to Divine Wisdom miraculously to wash away. And it seems manifest, that it was better for Mankind that Christianity should be propagated with those Corruptions, than that it should be left unsupported under the Malice and Violence of its Enemies. For surely it will be allowed by the Anonymous Writer himself, that *St. Chrysostom*, *St. Jerom*, and *St. Austin*, though they held some Errors both in Doctrine and Practice, were much better Men than if they had continued Heathens. And much more true is the Observation with regard to the preceding Ages, when the Errors were not so considerable.

To rational Men the Christian Miracles, which had no particular Relation to those Corruptions, could afford no Confirmations of them. And though many injudicious Persons might suppose, that those Miracles, which in Reality *only confirmed* the essential Truths of Christianity, *confirmed even* the Corruptions; yet it was indisputably better that they should receive Christianity, together with the Corruptions which were introduced in the Fourth and Fifth Ages, than not receive it at all: Which would probably have been the Case of many, had no Miracles been wrought in those Ages.

In short, it appears evidently to me, that God acted with regard to the Church, as the prudent Husbandman is represented in the Gospel to do with respect to the Tares and the Wheat. He

permitted Corruptions to be propagated together with the great Truths of Christianity, lest he should destroy them together.

As to the particular Miracles relating to the Corruptions introduced into the Church, they deserve a distinct Consideration. These, as represented by the Anonymous Author, are Miracles attributed to *Monks*, to the *Reliques of Martyrs*, to the *sacred Oil*, and *Sign of the Cross* on the Body.

And before I enter upon an exact Enquiry into each, I would observe, that the five Miracles, which I have insisted upon in the foregoing Work, have no Relation to these Corruptions.

The Anonymous Writer has indeed proved, that St. *Athanasius* greatly contributed to settling Monasteries; and that St. *Basil*, St. *Jerom*, and St. * *Chrysostom* highly commend this Way of Life. But then it is manifest, that in those Ages the Lives of Monks were as exemplary for Piety, as they afterwards became flagrant for the most monstrous Vices and Impieties †.

'Tis true, that St. *Jerom*, in the Lives of *Paul* and *Hilarion*, relates several Miracles of these Monks which are not probable; yet he does by no Means relate them as *Matters of his own Knowledge*. Nor is the Suspicion of Mr. *Daillé* at all well-grounded, when he hints, that probably the good Father might

* This Father, indeed, says of Monks in his Age, Ἀγγέλων ὅδ' ἐν χεῖρον δαίκενται. But if we read the Letters of many of them to him, we shall find, that many more extravagant Expressions are excused in Orators.

† *Sozomen* assures us, that *Julian* intended to build Monasteries for both Sexes, in order to make Heathenism as amiable as Christianity, Ὑπολαβὼν --- τὸν Χριστιανισμὸν τῆς σύγκρισιν ἔχειν ἰσὺ τῷ εἶναι, &c. διανοεῖτο — φροντισητέοις τε ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν φιλοσοφεῖν ἐργασίαν καὶ καταγωγίους ξένων καὶ πτωχῶν καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ τῇ περὶ τὰς δεομένας φιλανθρωπίας τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν δόγμα σεμνύναι. L. V. c. 15. We see that Monasteries are here joined with Hospitals: And if Monks gave such Examples of Piety and Virtue, as to make the great Enemy of our Religion think, that the Institution deserved to be copied; it cannot be thought unreasonable in St. *Chrysostom* and St. *Austin*, &c. to give this Institution great Praise at a very small Distance of Time from *Julian's* Days.

only write these Performances as *Romances*, in order to shew his *Invention* and his *Eloquence*. For 'tis plain, that this Suspicion rests on no better Ground than the *bare Possibility* that any historical Account, of which we do not actually know the Truth, may proceed only from the Invention of the Relator. But though there is a bare Possibility of this, when the Case is considered *abstractedly* from the Character of the Reciter; yet when that is considered in the present Case, it is a moral Impossibility that St. *Jerom*, whose Piety is very evident, and who does not appear to have adopted the Principle of *defending Truth by Falshood*, should seriously apply his great Talents to write two extravagant Romances in Favour of Christianity. I maintain that it is a moral Impossibility: For the Principle of defending Truth by Falshood, is in itself so evidently absurd and contradictory, that it must in Reasoning be esteemed a moral Impossibility for a Person, who is allowed to be possess'd of good Sense in other Respects, to admit it. And therefore, since St. *Jerom* is allowed, even by his Enemies, to have been a Person of very great Abilities, and it does not at all appear from his Writings that he adopted this absurd Principle, we must conclude it a moral Impossibility for him to have acted seriously upon this Principle in writing the Lives of *Paul* and *Hilarion*.

Besides, I desire the intelligent Reader to attend to this Consideration; *the very Extravagance which proves the Relations themselves highly improbable, proves also the high Probability that St. Jerom did not forge them.* For had he set about a Forgery, he was Master of so much Judgment as to have copied from the preceeding Accounts of Miracles; and here he found nothing which resembled the Extravagance of those Relations which he has given us. Let us suppose that he was ever so firmly resolved to exalt the Honour of the Monastic Order, yet he
would

would certainly have pursued this End by Methods most likely to succeed ; and these could not consist with suffering his Invention to dictate such Extravagancies as were no where to be met with in the Records of the Church. The Truth then appears, that St. *Jerom* really received these extravagant Accounts from others ; and he seems to have been *too credulous*, yet his Credulity may admit many Excuses. 1st, The Conviction which he had, that many of the Monks were Persons of eminent Piety, such as might deserve to be the Favourites of the Almighty. 2^{dly}, The Certainty that in the first Ages God conferred miraculous Gifts even on *ordinary* Christians. 3^{dly}, The apparent Decay of Piety in the World ; which might make him think it highly probable that God would confer special Gifts on those who seemed most likely to restore Piety by their Example. 4^{thly}, The Veneration of the People for these Monks, and the frequent Attestations, probably, of their Miracles, which he met with. I may add, notwithstanding any Thing which yet appears to the contrary, his own Knowledge that *some* Monks wrought *some* Miracles.

I will only add, with regard to these extravagant Stories related by St. *Jerom*, that they seem the Produce of repeated Narration improved every Time by the Relator ; and in the next Place, that the Circumstance is ridiculous, which Mr. *Daillé* adds as a Confirmation that St. *Jerom* might forge these Stories. He * observes that St. *Jerom* himself acknowledges that his Enemies supposed something of this Kind. Now although it were most evident that St. *Jerom*'s Enemies did actually with one Voice declare, that he forged the Stories, no Argument could be hence formed to prove that he *really* did so. But in the next Place, it does not appear from St. *Jerom*'s

* L'Employ des Peres. C. v.

Words, that his Enemies did actually suppose him to have forged the Accounts. He only says, * “ That those who had “ *detracted from his Paul*, would also *detract from his Hilarion.*” And surely these People might lessen or deny the Fame of the Monks by supposing the Miracles, attributed to them, mere Inventions, and yet not suppose the good Father the Author of them : But he expressly says that these People calumniated *Paul not on Account of his Miracles.* In the last Place I would observe to the Reader, that a Person may relate as probable what he has received from the Accounts of others ; though he would not relate the same Things as probable in a Performance of mere Invention. For in the former Case the Thing is considered *together with the Credit of the Relator* ; and a good Man is inclined by Charity to judge favourably of the Person who gives the Relation. In the latter Case the Matter is considered *abstractedly from this Advantage.*

As to the Miracles supposed by the Fathers to be performed at the Tombs and Reliques of Martyrs ; it very well deserves Consideration, that there is little or no Difference between the Clothes, &c. which a *dead* Man has left behind him, and those which are left by a *living* one. If the living Person is of great Reputation, there is nearly, if not intirely, the same Danger that his Clothes, &c. which by Touch confer miraculous Cures, will be adored, as that the Clothes, &c. of a dead Man will. And yet we are assured in Holy Writ, that even † Handkerchiefs brought from *Paul*, cured Diseases immediately. And surely it is no Wonder if several Heathens actually worship’d him as a God on this Account, since the ‡ *Lystrians* did so on a less Occasion.

* Olim detrahentes Paulo meo, nunc fortè detrahent et Hilarioni ; illum Solitudinis calumniati, huic objicientes frequentiam. Vit. Hil.

† Acts C. xix. 12.

‡ Acts C. xiv. 11.

It was full as reasonable, and as little dangerous with regard to Idolatry, that the *Dust* of a dead Man should perform Cures, as that they should be effected by the *Shadow* of a living one ; which was † *Peter's* Case. And it seems very probable that the Reflexion on these surprising Miracles made the later Fathers much more willing to believe that Miracles were really wrought by the Tombs and Reliques of Martyrs in their Ages. At least ‡ *St. Chrysostom* speaks of those extraordinary Miracles in the Apostles' Age in such a Manner as makes it evident that they made great Impression on his Mind. And 'tis scarce possible that this strong Impression should not incline him very much to believe the Miracles wrought by Reliques in his own Age. So that although it could be proved that no Miracles of this Sort were actually wrought in that Age, yet these Considerations may render it highly probable that the Fathers of that Age did not *forge* those Accounts, but were only *too credulous*. But several other Considerations will confirm this Opinion of the Integrity of the Fathers, if not the Reality of all the Miracles which they relate, with respect to Reliques.

For in one of the most § antient and undisputed Accounts which Church History boasts of, we are informed, that || when *St. Polycarp* was fastened to the Stake, and the Faggots were kindled around him, the Flame encompass'd him in the

† *Acts* C. v. v. 15.

‡ Οὐ χεῖρα πηλίνην μόνον ἦν ἰδεῖν, ἀλλ' ὁ πολλῶ θανματότερον ἦν, πηλίνων σωμάτων ΣΚΙΑΣ καὶ Θανάτε καὶ δυνάμειν ἀσωμάτων περιγενομένης, τῶν δαιμόνων λέγω. *Serm. I. in Pentecost.*

§ The Epistle of the Church of *Smyrna*, where *Polycarp* was Bishop, to the Church of *Philomilium*, preserved by *Eusebius*. E. H. L. iv. C. 16.

|| Μεγάλης—ἐκλαμπάσης φλογός, θαῦμα εἶδομεν οἷς ἰδεῖν ἐδόθη, οἱ καὶ ἐτηρήθησαν ἀναγυῖλαι τοῖς λοιποῖς τὰ γινόμενα. Τὸ γὰρ πῦρ καμάρας εἶδον ποιῆσαν, ὥσπερ ἐδόνης πλοῖα ὑπὸ πνεύματι πληρωμένης κύκλῳ περιετείχιζε τὸ σῶμα τῷ μάρτυρι. Καὶ ἦν μέσον ἔχον ὡς φάρξ καιομένη, ἀλλ' ὡς Χρυσὸς καὶ ἀργυρὸς ἐν καμίνῳ πυρρῶμεν. Καὶ γὰρ ἐνωδίας τοσαύτης ἀντελαμβανόμεθα, ὡς λίθων πύριον, &c.

Manner

Manner of a large Sail, so that no Part of his Body was burnt, and yet a most grateful Odour issued forth. Now this Fact cannot be disputed, being related by Eye-Witnesses of unblemish'd Characters. We are told that the Bones of the Martyr * were collected, in order that the Anniversary of his Martyrdom might be observed with more Reverence in the Place where these were deposited ; and surely People would be naturally inclined to believe, that some Divine Power attended these Reliques, since such a miraculous Power had been exerted with regard to them even in the Act of Martyrdom. (If the holy Man was honoured with a miraculous Power, which preserved his Body, while he was only *fighting* for the Crown of Martyrdom ; it was natural to suppose, that the miraculous preservative Power would not desert his Body, when he had *received that Crown* of Martyrdom.) So that any Argument drawn from the apparent Danger of encouraging Idolatry by conferring a miraculous Power on the Martyr's Reliques, would prove against the Reality of this Miracle in the Act of Martyrdom, attested by the Church of *Smyrna* as Eye-witnesses, in an Age no wise fabulous. So that to deny this Miracle, must be to shake the Foundation of our Belief of any Point of History whatever, in profane Authors at least. As to the miraculous Silence of *Apollo's* Oracle at *Antioch*, or rather the miraculous Destruction of his Temple there ; though St. *Chrysostom* does seem too bold, when he attributes it to the Prayers of the Martyr, and his Interest with God ; yet the Authority of the Fact is not by any Means lessened. St. *Chrysostom* does not so much as hint, *that any Prayers were offered to the Martyr*, in order to procure this miraculous Destruction of the Heathen Temple ; and the End proposed, *viz.* the confounding *Julian* and the

* Ub. sup.

Heathen Worship was entirely worthy God. I may here justly observe, that if the Transactions of *Paul's* curing Diseases by sending Handkerchiefs, Aprons, &c. and *Peter's* doing the same by his Shadow, had not been recorded by St. *Luke*, but had been derived, as they easily might, without Corruption to *Justin's* Time, and by him inserted in his Apology to the Heathens ; — such Writers, as our present Anonymous one, would have abused poor *Justin* as a Knave or a Fool, or both, on this single Account, as much as the Fathers of the Fourth Century are abused for their Accounts of Miracles performed by the Reliques of Martyrs.

Yet it is certain, that as important Reasons may be assigned, why God should permit some miraculous Power to be present at the Tombs, &c. of Martyrs, as can be given why God should exert a miraculous Power at the Approach of Handkerchiefs, &c. from *Paul's* Body to that of the Sick.

The Sufferings of Christians, especially the Sufferings of those who became Martyrs, were artfully formed into an Argument against the Divinity of their Religion by Heathens ; as is evident from almost every Apology for our Faith. Besides, the malicious Invention of the Heathen Persecutors was so great, that many Persons, though perfectly convinced of the Divinity of our holy Religion, were yet forced by exquisite Tortures to * *make Shipwreck of their Faith*, as the great Apostle expresses himself. The Heathens urged, that an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good God would not permit his peculiar Favourites to suffer such exquisite Misery. But when it appeared by the Miracles not only attending the very Act of Martyrdom, but even the Tombs and Reliques of the Martyrs, that an *Almighty Power* acknowledged those Martyrs for his *peculiar* Servants ;

* 1 Tim. i. 19.

on one Hand the Argument of the Heathens against the Divinity of our holy Religion, was confuted ; and, on the other Hand, future Martyrs were greatly animated to run the same Course of Glory.

'Tis true, that in Procefs of Time the miraculous Power, which *only attended* the Martyrs' Reliques, was supposed *inherent* in them ; and then by Degrees Men easily were persuaded to pay Divine Honours to the Martyrs, and to adore the Reliques. Yet this same exceffive and blameable Devotion, which greatly contributes to prove, that many Miracles, ascribed in later Ages to Reliques, &c. were not true ; contributes also to prove, that in the early Ages real Miracles were wrought at the Tombs, &c. of Martyrs : For it is perfectly inconceivable how Men could be persuaded originally to fall down and adore mere Duft and Afhes, had they not been convinced that those Reliques were found by Experience to be the *Means* or *Signs* of miraculous Blessings.

It is true that the *Romanists* adore Reliques, from which they receive no miraculous Blessings.—But then the Case of these People is widely different from that of Christians in primitive Times. Custom, and the Principles of Education, are sufficient to account for that blind Devotion which *Romanists* pay to their Reliques ; especially if we add the many Contrivances of Priests, who are greatly interested to preserve the Appearance and Belief of Miracle. And when real Miracles ceased at the Tombs of Martyrs, for wise Reasons of Providence, it was not difficult for artful Priests to continue some Appearance of Miracle, and impose upon Persons who were convinced upon good Grounds, that Miracles had formerly *really* been wrought in these Places.

But it is inconceivable what Motives could persuade the Clergy to inculcate, or the Laity to practise, the Adoration of Martyrs originally, if they were not both Parties convinced of the Reality of Miracles wrought by these Reliques. For in the early Ages the Clergy had not learn'd the Art of religious Traffick : They could make no Advantage of inculcating the Doctrine ; and therefore they must have been persuaded, though falsely, of the Reasonableness of the Duty, as a Return of Gratitude for the Blessings which they supposed themselves to have received *immediately* from the Martyrs. For it appears plainly, that the primitive Christians did not esteem themselves bound in Duty to adore the Martyrs on Account of their transcendent Excellence, since they had obtained the Crown of Martyrdom ; as some of the Philosophers who denied a Providence, yet supposed themselves bound to adore the Deity. For the Church of *Smyrna*, in the above-cited venerable Epistle declare, in Confutation of the *Jewish* Calumny, that they intended not to adore *Polycarp* ; * “ *We adore Jesus the Son of God ; but we love the Martyrs deservedly, on account of their boundless Affection to their King and Master.*” Since then it hence appears that the Adoration of Martyrs was not introduced into the Church together with the erecting Monuments to them, on account of their superlative Excellence ; nay, since it was declared by the Church of *Smyrna*, who built a Monument over the Remains of *St. Polycarp*, that he did not *deserve Adoration on Account of his Exaltation by Martyrdom* ; 'tis far most probable, that it was at last introduced as a Debt of Gratitude for miraculous Blessings received.

* Τῶτον μὲν — ὕδιν ὄντα τῷ Θεῷ προσκυνῶμεν τὴς δὲ μάργυρας — ἀγαπῶμεν ἀξίως, ἕνεκα εὐνοίας ἀνυπερβλήτης τῆς εἰς τὸν ἴδιον βασιλεία καὶ διδασκαλον. Ub. sup.

St. *Jerom* was naturally of a warm Temper, as sufficiently appears by his Addresses to *Ruffinus*. He was engaged in Defence of some Points of Doctrine and Practice which he could not maintain. Is it at all wonderful that *such* a Person in *such* a Situation should reproach his Adversary as bitterly as he thought could be consistent with Truth? Now it cannot be proved that the Power of casting out Devils did not remain in the Church even when St. *Jerom* maintain'd this Dispute. For Arch-Bishop *Tillotson* very rationally supposes it to have continued, as long as the Pagan Worship, the Power of the Devil continued to be anywise considerable. And by St. *Austin's* writing his justly-celebrated Work about the City of God, in order to obviate an Objection which *Heathens* made to our Holy Religion; as also from *Marcellinus's* Epistle beseeching him to give an accurate Answer to such as maintained that *Apollonius* wrought as great Miracles as our Lord; and from many other Arguments it might be made evident, that the Opposition of Heathenism to Christianity was still considerable. But if it be not allowed that the Power of casting out Devils continued in the Church at the Time when St. *Jerom* engaged with *Vigilantius*, yet it cannot at least be made in anywise probable that St. *Jerom* did *not believe it to continue*. When he tells *Vigilantius* † that he is afraid of approaching the Monuments of the Martyrs, lest the Devil which possesses him should be tortured;—What therefore is the Consequence? That St. *Jerom* being naturally warm, and engaged on the wrong Side of the Question, exercises a little too much Credulity and Severity.

† Sentio, sentio, infelicissime Mortalium, quid doleas, quid timeas. Spiritus iste immundus, qui hæc te cogit scribere, sæpè hoc vilissimo tortus est pulvere, immo hodièque torquetur; et qui in te plagas dissimulat, in ceteris confitetur. Vol. II. Cont. Vig. Serm. II.

But

But I must not quit the Examination of St. *Jerom's* Conduct in this Affair, without observing what is extremely to the Purpose, *viz.* That *Vigilantius* himself, who was the most violent Opposer of the Adoration of Martyrs, and therefore can least of all be supposed prejudiced in Favour of the Miracles ascribed to their Reliques, does not by any Means deny that Miracles were wrought where the Reliques are deposited. On the contrary, he plainly acknowledges the Reality of these Miracles; and what is very remarkable, and much to the Purpose, he supposes that these Miracles were of more Use to convert Infidels, than confirm Believers. So that he allows them to be efficacious chiefly to that End, for which chiefly I suppose it reasonable that they should be wrought. St. *Jerom* was too sagacious not to take this Advantage. ‡ “ Our Lord, (says he) “ wrought Miracles for the Sake of Infidels; and yet it would “ be so far from being reasonable on this Account to lessen the “ Dignity of those Miracles, that they deserve greater Admiration; since they converted their hardest Hearts to the Faith.”

It is allowed that St. *Chrysostom* § does very warmly exhort his Flock to fall before the Reliques of the Martyrs; and it is also allowed to be most highly improbable, that God would

‡ The whole Passage cannot be ungrateful to the Reader. Argumentatur contra signa atque virtutes, quæ in Basilicis Martyrum fiunt; et dicit eas incredulis prodesse, non credentibus; quasi nunc hoc quærat, quibus fiant, et non quâ virtute fiant. Esto; signa sint infidelium; qui quoniam Sermoni et doctrinæ credere noluerunt, signis adducantur ad fidem. Et Dominus incredulis Signa faciebat; et tamen non ideo Domini suggillanda sunt Signa, quia illi infideles erant; sed majori admirationi erunt, quia tantæ fuere potentiæ, ut etiam mentes durissimas edomarent, et ad fidem cogerent. Ub. sup.

§ In the very Conclusion of his Panegyric on the Martyrs *Prosdice* and *Bernice*, and *Domniam* their Mother.

exert

exert a miraculous Power to confer Blessings as a Reward of falling before the Martyr's Reliques.

But what Tendency has this Discovery to determine the Point in Dispute? Does St. *Chrysostom* affirm that Miracles were procured by the Adoration of the Martyrs? No—He does not assert any Thing of this Kind. And yet it is very evident that no Argument was so proper to prevail upon his Audience to adore the Martyrs, as that which insists upon the Miracles performed by them. The Truth of the Matter seems this: St. *Chrysostom* was conscious that the Practice of praying to the Martyrs, and falling before their Reliques was lately introduced into the Church; and he knew not that any Miracles had *actually* been performed as a clear and immediate Consequence of these Practices. And therefore though he thought the Practices reasonable, and knew that Miracles had been formerly wrought in these Monuments, yet he would not absolutely assert that Miracles attended these Practices; but attributes Power * *in general* to the Martyrs as *to Guardians*; and only says † *in general* that their Bones *have*, and Coffins *may have*, great Power.

And whoever reflects upon what has been said in Defence of the miraculous burning *Apollo's* Temple at *Antioch*, which St. *Chrysostom* had himself seen, and makes a very moderate Allowance for his Prejudices in Favour of these Novel Doctrines, may allow that the good Father might deliver this Conclusion of his Panegyric without any Design of imposing on others, or without being grievously imposed on, as to Matter of Fact,

* Παρακαλῶμεν αὐτὰς, ἀξιώμεν γενέσθαι προσεπίδας ἡμῶν πολλὴν γὰρ ἔχουσι παρρησίαν ἐνὶ ζῶσαι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τελευτήσασαι καὶ πολλῶ μᾶλλον τελευτήσασαι.

† ΔΥΝΑΝΤΑΙ—Θῆκαι μαρτύρων πολλὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, ὥσπερ ἐν καὶ τὰ ὅσα τῶν μαρτύρων πολλὴν ἔχει τὴν ἰσχύν,

himself.

himself. Nor is his other general Assertion, that † *many Miracles were every Day performed by the Martyrs*, any Proof that we ought not to credit his Account of particular Miracles on his own Knowledge.

'Tis true that § “ *St. Austin also affirms, that at Milan, while he was there present, the Reliques of the Martyrs Protasius and Gervasius, which lay buried in a Place unknown, were revealed to St. Ambrose in a Dream; and that by the Touch only of the same Reliques, a blind Man was restored to his Sight; of which the whole People was Witness, who flocked in Crouds to the Bodies of the said Martyrs.*”

But though the Father affirms that he *was present*, he only affirms || that he *was at Milan*, not that *he saw the Miracle performed*. And our Anonymous Writer's translating the Words † “ *the whole People,*” which should be translated, “ *an immense Croud,*” seems not to proceed from a Love of Truth, or from mere Neglect, but from a Design of forcing *St. Austin* to be one of the Number of Spectators.

I must not quit the Examination of *St. Austin's* Declarations on this Head, without laying before the Reader, the Sentiments of the truly-learned and judicious *Dr. Cave*; who speaks in the following rational Manner :

* “ That which most sways with me, is what *St. Augustin* reports of these Matters, who seems to have been inquisitive about Matters of Fact, as the Argument he managed did require. For being to demonstrate against the Gentiles that

† Ἰκανὰ μὲν τὸν λόγον πεισάσασθαι καὶ τὰ καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ὑπὸ τῶν μαρτύρων γινόμενα θαυμάσια.

§ Introduct. Disc.

|| Miraculum quod Mediolani factum est, cum ILLIC

ESSEMUS. de Civ. Dei. L. xxii. C. 8.

† IMMENSO POPULO.

* Life

of *Stephen*. C. 28. 30.

“ Miracles were not altogether ceased in the Christian Church;
 “ among several others he produces many Instances of Cures
 “ miraculously done at the Remains of *St. Stephen*, &c.—Cer-
 “ tain it is, that nothing was done herein, but what did very
 “ well consist with the Wisdom and the Goodness of God,
 “ who, as he is never wont to be prodigal in multiplying the
 “ Effects of his omnipotent Power beyond a just Necessity, so
 “ is never wanting to afford all necessary Evidences and Me-
 “ thods of Conviction. That therefore the unbelieving World
 “ (who made this the *great Refuge* of their Infidelity) might
 “ see, that his Arm was not grown effete and weak, that he
 “ had not left the Christian Religion wholly destitute of imme-
 “ diate and miraculous Attestations, he was pleased to exert
 “ these extraordinary Powers, that he might baffle their Unbe-
 “ lief, and silence their Objections against the Divinity of the
 “ Christian Faith. — I shall observe no more than that in *all*
 “ these Cases related by *St. Augustin*, we *never* find that they
 “ invoked or pray’d to the Martyr, or begged to be healed
 “ by his Merits or Intercession, but *immediately directed* their
 “ Addresses to God himself.”

The impartial Reader has now seen, how many probable Ar-
 guments have been urged by *Dr. Cave* and myself, for the Re-
 ality of these very Miracles, which are with most Plausibility
 argued against by the Anonymous Author. And if they should
 not have so much Weight with him, as to persuade him of
 their Reality; yet thus much we may reasonably hope, that
 these Arguments will incline him to allow, that very good Men,
 such as *St. Jerom*, *St. Chrysostom*, and *St. Austin*, might receive
 them in general as true from the Authority of others, and de-
 liver them with great Sincerity. But as for those few which
 they declare themselves Witnesses of, till better Arguments ap-

pear than any which the Anonymous Writer has yet produced;—I must be allowed to maintain them as true. And before I can reasonably yield up the Point, one of these three Things must be proved; either an *absolute Inconsistency* between God's Attributes and the Miracle supposed to be performed, or a *great Probability* that the Senses of the Fathers were deceived in the Things which they affirm themselves to have seen; or, in the last Place, a *great Probability* that these Fathers would circumstantially describe as Matter of Fact what they knew not to be such.

As to the Errors of the primitive Fathers with regard to the *mix'd Cup*, the sending the Sacrament to the *Absent*, and *infant Communion*; what Relation have they to the Anonymous Author's present Employment*, which is an Enquiry into the Resemblance between the Errors of the primitive Fathers and the *Romanists*, as also between the Miracles pretended to in Support of each?

Our Author allows, that the *mix'd Cup* was originally a Matter of Prudence, and can be proved from the Writings of the Fathers as early as *Justin*. What Wonder then, if *Irenæus* supposed it to have been derived from our Lord's Days; since this Father lived a considerable Time after *Justin*? What Wonder also, if *St. Cyprian* also giving into the *almost universal* Opinion, and being only a *new Convert* to Christianity, should dream, that the *mix'd Cup* was commanded him by God; since our Dreams often greatly resemble our waking Thoughts; and the Point now being begun to be debated, must be reasonably supposed to employ his Thoughts much? What Wonder, I say, if *Cyprian* lately converted from Heathenism, in which Dreams frequently pass'd for indisputable Revelation, should boast of a

* Introduct. Disc. p. 12.

Revelation? Would it thence follow, that we must pay no Credit to his Relations of his *waking* Thoughts; nay, nor to those of any one else among the Fathers? Surely, no—

But did St. *Cyprian* really boast of a particular Revelation? No such Thing, our Anonymous Writer mistakes *his own Dreams* for *other People's Revelations*.

* “ You must know (says St. *Cyprian* to *Cæcilius*) that I am “ *admonish'd* that the Tradition of our Lord should be observed “ in offering the Cup.” And was this Tradition of our Lord, of which he declares that he was admonish'd, that Water should be mix'd with Wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Nothing of this Kind does he express, he only † declares, that he was admonish'd or instructed by the Command of our Lord, and by Types that there could be no Communion of the Lord's Supper *without Wine*; as the *Aquarii*, or Water-drinkers, falsely affirmed that there might. What a Misrepresentation of St. *Cyprian* is here! Surely, before Men undertake to destroy the Authority of the Fathers, they should condescend to read them; at least such Passages as they intend to object to. And yet, from the Manner in which these Passages are cited from *Cyprian*, one would naturally conclude, that the Anonymous Author had never read them in the Original.

But *Cyprian* is not yet suffer'd to be at Ease. He is brought to declare, that a ‡ Woman, who peeped into the Chest where

* *Admonitos autem nos scias, ut in calice offerendo Dominica Traditio servetur. Epist LXIII. Ad Cæcil.*

† *Cùm dicat Christus, Ego sum vitis vera, sanguis Christi non aqua est utique sed vinum. Invenimus enim & in Genesi circa sacramentum Noe hoc idem præcurrisse, & figuram Dominicæ Passionis illic extitisse, quod vinum bibit — Item in sacerdote Melchisedeck, &c. Ibid.*

‡ *Cùm quædam arcam suam, in quâ Domini Sanctum fuit, manibus indignis tentasset aperire, igne inde surgente deterrita est. De Lapsis.*

she had hid the Host, was frightened with a Flash of Fire. And does *St. Cyprian* declare this on his own Knowledge? No, certainly, the good Woman took Care to peep at her Treasure, when alone, doubtless, at least it no wise appears that *St. Cyprian* was her Father Confessor: So that at most we can only blame his too charitable Opinion of the Woman's Integrity.

Again, Must we disbelieve all that the Fathers relate as Matters of their own Knowledge, because *St. Austin* unluckily happens to declare, * that in his Time Miracles were performed by the Name of Christ or his Sacraments: Especially since he grounds not his Assertion on his own Knowledge? — For he expressly informs us, that it was one of his Priests who was supposed to have performed the Miracle, that is, dispossessed the Devil by administering the Lord's Supper. Besides, it is evident that the good Father supposes, that the *Name of our Lord barely pronounced*, was as effectual to dispossess the Devil, as the Celebration of the Communion. So that he seems only to have mentioned the latter, because our Lord's Name is there pronounced with the greatest Solemnity.

As to *St. Ambrose's* † Story of *Satyrus's* Escape by the Help of the consecrated Bread, tied about his Neck in an Handkerchief; — it appears that *Satyrus* was a most excellent Swimmer, and both he and *Ambrose* attributed that to the Arms of Faith, and the Strength of Bread, which should have been attributed to the Strength of *Satyrus's* natural Arms, and his skilful Management of them. And must the over-great Faith of these two good Men destroy all our Faith in the Testimonies of the Fathers? So our Anonymous Writer would persuade us. The Error of *Tertullian* in praying for the Dead, might indeed lay

* Nunc fiunt miracula in ejus nomine, sive per sacramenta ejus. De Civ. Dei, L. XX. c. 8.

† In mortem Satyri.

the Foundation of the Popish Doctrine of a Purgatory ; but has no Relation to the Point in Dispute. For it is most willingly allowed, that many of the primitive Fathers held Errors like to or the same as those of the *Romanists*. But a Proof is demanded, why we must hence conclude, that the Fathers' Testimonies, as to Matter of Fact on their own Knowledge, are not to be regarded in any one Instance.

As to the Custom of Signing the Body with the Figure of the Cross, it cannot be doubted, but that it was originally extremely pious ; although it is now degenerated among the *Romanists* into Superstition, and by its Frequency among them is become *ridiculous*. Yet the Church of *England* uses it in Baptism, (as her Liturgy significantly expresses it) in Token that the new Christian shall not be ashamed manfully to fight under the Banner of Christ.

And under proper Restrictions this Sign might be used in many more Instances by us, without any reasonable Reproach. However it was commendable in Christians of *Tertullian's* Age, and the succeeding Ages, while they continued under Persecution, frequently to use the Sign of the Banner of their Profession, when they were *actually fighting* under it against the combined Powers of the World, and the Kingdom of Darkness. Nor can it be proved with any Probability, that in the early Ages, when miraculous Powers attended the *mere Pronunciation* of our Lord's Name, they *might* not also attend the Sign of the Cross ; especially since, as I have observed in the foregoing Work, the Heathens entertained a very considerable Prejudice against Christianity on account of the Ignominy of the Cross ; and it has appeared most reasonable to suppose that God might cause a miraculous Appearance of the Cross to *Constantine*, and again at *Jerusalem* ; as also the Impression of a Figure of a Cross on the
Clothes.

Clothes of the *Jews* at the Interruption of rebuilding *Jerusalem*. When therefore St. *Chrysostom* affirms in general, that many Miracles were performed by this Sign even in his Age; yet since it does not appear that the Crucifix was then adored, it cannot be proved, but these Miracles might be real. Or if it could be proved that they were not so, it would only follow that the good Father was a *little* too credulous.

As to the Miracles attributed to the sacred Oil, they have been considered under the two former Heads of Monks and Reliques; since this Oil was either prepared and distributed by the Monks, or taken from Lamps burning before the Reliques of Martyrs. It cannot be proved probable, that Miracles were not performed in the early Ages by this * Oil. For if our Lord himself condescended to apply Clay tempered with Spittle, when he cured the Man born blind, we may not unreasonably suppose, that God might confine the Performance of some Cures in the Fourth Century to the Application of Oil. Yet I must be so ingenuous as to confess that I cannot help suspecting, that the good Fathers were sometimes too credulous in the Accounts of this Species of Miracles. As to † the Cures of the Bites of venomous Animals by the Application of Oil which

* It is very well worth Observation, that *Tertullian* in his Address to *Scapula*, the cruel President of *Afric*, insists much upon *Severus's* Kindness to a Christian who had miraculously cured him with the sacred Oil. Now it cannot be supposed that *Tertullian* would have insisted upon this Miracle, had it not been a Fact certain beyond Dispute, and which *Scapula* himself was not unacquainted with; or at least what he might easily be made acquainted with. Because otherwise, the insisting on this Miracle might be very dangerous, or at best of no Use. His Words are; *Proculum Christianum, qui Torpacion cognominabatur, Euaodiae Procuratorem, Qui eum PER OLEUM aliquando curaverat, requisivit [Severus] et in palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem ejus.* C. iv.

† *Benedicto itaque oleo, &c. vit. Hil.*

the

the Martyrs prepared, as St. *Jerom* relates in the Life of *Hilarion*, I can believe them true, and yet suppose them merely natural. For Oil is of excellent Use against all Kinds of Poison; and as 'tis said to be prepared by the Monks, I doubt not but it might contain some other Drugs proper to appease Swellings and Inflammations. Though St. *Austin* declares that † he knew a young Woman who was freed from a Devil by being anointed with the Martyr's Oil; yet I can suppose it possible for the Priest and the young Woman to agree to deceive the good Bishop, and by his Authority to propagate the Fame of the Miracle thro' the World; though 'tis said expressly, that the Priest *dropt Tears* into the Oil. However, I can reasonably enough suppose that the Holy Father was imposed upon by the Story that § a Person was restored to Life by this Oil; though 'tis said that this Miracle was performed at the Place of St. *Austin*'s Residence. For although 'tis not impossible that the young Woman might be delivered from a Devil by Application of the Oil, especially since 'tis not said that the Priest made his Petition to the Martyr; yet I cannot think it probable that God would permit such a miraculous Power as that of raising the Dead, to attend the Application of the Martyr's Oil in an Age when that Honour, which was originally shewn not improperly to the Martyrs, was degenerated in almost all Places into flat Idolatry. The general Expressions of St. *Chrysostom* on this Head, may be accounted for in the same Manner.

As to Images and Pictures, although St. *Austin* declares that || he knew many, who were actually the Adorers of them; yet

† Hipponensem quandam Virginem SCIO, &c. De Civ. Dei. L. xxii. C. 8.
§ Rufus APUD NOS, &c. ibid.

|| Introduct. Disc. p. 21.

this Circumstance is so far from weakening the Credit of the Miracles of the Fourth Century *universally*, that it rather confirms them *in general*. For since People are naturally desirous of having it believed, that the Objects of their Adoration are possess'd of a Divine Power; and since it does not appear that any Pretensions to Miracles performed by Pictures and Images, were heard of in the Fourth Century, though there were many Adorers both of Images and Pictures, 'tis most reasonable to suppose that these People were sensible that they could not obtain a Belief of Miracles in that Age without *some real* Foundation. It was, as I have above observed, not extremely difficult to continue a Belief that Miracles were performed by Places, Reliques, &c. which had been actually known to be attended by a miraculous Power; but they durst not presume on so difficult a Task in the Fourth Century, as Pretensions to Miracles performed by Images and Pictures. This Attempt was reserved for later Ages of greater Darkneſs, when Image-worship was firmly settled, when every Thing was in the Power of Priests, and Machinery improved.

And now our Anonymous Author produces his Conclusion from the foregoing Premises.

* “ *After the Conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, we shall find the greatest Part of their boasted Miracles to have been wrought either by Monks or Reliques, or the Sign of the Cross, or consecrated Oil; wherefore if we admit the Miracles, we must necessarily admit the Rites, for the Sake of which they were wrought.—For it is a Maxim which must be allowed by all Christians, that whenever any sacred Rite or religious Institution becomes the Instrument of real Miracles, we ought to consider that Rite as confirmed by Divine Approbation.*”

I have many considerable Objections to this Conclusion. In the first Place, I have distinctly shewn that we may allow Miracles to have been performed by a Power attending upon a monastic Life, upon the Reliques of Martyrs, the Sign of the Cross, and consecrated Oil, *before these Rites and Institutions were abused*. And it does not appear that any of the Fathers declare actually upon their own Knowledge, that Miracles were wrought as Consequences of these Rites and Institutions thus abused. And therefore though we allow real Miracles to have attended upon these Rites on the Authority of the Fathers, we may consistently reject these Rites *abused* as they are by the *Romish Church*.

In the next Place, although we should allow real Miracles to have been the Consequences of the Performance of these Rites when abused, yet we might consistently still reject the Rites themselves ; for if they can be proved inconsistent with God's Commands, it is inconsistent to suppose them to be confirmed by his Power, and therefore we must conclude these Miracles the Operations of evil Spirits.

And now our Anonymous Author gives the Reader to understand that he is a DOCTOR. For he talks of something which * "*has puzzled all the other Doctors.*" Strange Vanity ! For some Reasons best known to himself, our Author chose to be Anonymous — But yet, that he may not lose the Influence which his Titles and Distinction may have on one Sort of Readers, he takes especial Care to palm his Doctorship upon us. I should not have taken Notice of this Circumstance, had it not been evident, that this Conduct is quite inconsistent with our Author's Pretensions in other Places. He, who is so far from paying any Regard to Title and Distinction, that he sneers

* Introduct. Disc. p. 26.

upon a very learned Person for being † *Archdeacon* and a *Lambeth Chaplain*, should least of any one be solicitous to inform his Readers of his Doctorship : He who will not pay so much decent Respect to the Mitres of many of the ancient Fathers, as to forbear Censures, which amount to the Titles of Knaves and Fools, should least of any obtrude a Sort of oracular Authority of a Doctor.

Mr. *Dodwell* has entered a Plea for the Reality of some Miracles related by St. *Chrysostom*. But our Anonymous Author asserts, that

* “ *If there be any Difference between this particular Father and the rest of them ; It is clearly to the Disadvantage of St. Chrysostom, when considered in the Character of a Witness. For his peculiar Talents were those of a declamatory Preacher, whose Art lay in warming the Passions, not in convincing the Reason ; and whose pompous Stile and rhetorical Flourishes, instead of being adapted to a simple Narrative of plain Facts, was apt rather to exaggerate plain Facts into Miracles.* ”

Anonymous here discovers an Ignorance, either real or affected, of St. *Chrysostom*’s Stile. He is no Declaimer : He is an Orator ; but he is a manly one. He has little or nothing of the swol’n and pompous in his Stile ; at least in Comparison of most of the other Fathers. The Stream of his Eloquence is indeed bright as Gold : — But then ’tis equable and gentle. I need not surely say to the learned World, that the Talents of a declamatory Preacher were so far from being peculiar to him ; that if we read the Compositions of *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, St. *Jerom*, &c. and then turn to those of St. *Chrysostom*, he will appear to act the Censor upon them all. In

† Introduct. Disc. p. last.

* P. 27.

short, I will venture to undertake, that more Instances of a declamatory Genius shall be produced from the Works of *Tully* than those of *St. Chrysostom*. Had *St. Chrysostom* been only a Declaimer, had he been unable to reason; one of the greatest Ornaments of our Nation, Archbishop *Tillotson*, would not have made him his Companion almost as constantly as the Saint had made *Aristophanes*. However, if any one still doubts of this Father's Abilities to reason, let him peruse those admirable Discourses against the *Jews*.

But let us examine how far an oratoric Genius, which is not guilty of the Extravagance of Declaimers, may be reasonably supposed to misrepresent Facts. It is allowed then, that since the *Occasion* and the *absolute Cause*, are most closely allied, and frequently put for each other, even in the Language of common Life, an oratoric Genius may be supposed to apply this Disposition more effectually to persuade an Audience. Thus, for Instance, it is certain that the Reliques of holy Men may be the *Occasion* of exciting and promoting in us such Thoughts as may persuade us to enter upon, or confirm us in a Course of Virtue and Piety. And thus they may be said, in common Language, to *have* great Power; and an oratoric Genius may represent them as the *Causes* of some great Alterations, in order more effectually to fix the Attention of People to those Reliques. And thus might *St. Chrysostom* do in the Conclusion of a Panegyric Oration, when he tells us, that the Coffins of Martyrs *may have Power*.

But that a manly oratoric Genius should persuade a Person to deliver in a public Assembly, an important Fact as publicly done, to describe all the minute Circumstances, and not only deliver it upon the Testimony of his own Senses, but call upon his Audience as Witnesses; (all which I have shewn, that *St.*

Chrysostom does, with regard to the miraculous Destruction of *Apollo's Temple at Antioch*) though he knew that it was all mere Fiction, is utterly incredible.

Our Anonymous Doctor proceeds.

* “ *As there is no Ground for any Preference in his personal Character, so there is none likewise in the particular Miracles which he attests; which are all said to be wrought — by the Reliques of the Dead, or the Oil of Lamps, or the Sign of the Cross.*”

Here again our Doctor censures an Author whom he has either not read, or at best has forgot : For can it be said, that the Rebuilding *Jerusalem* was interrupted by any of the Things above-mentioned ? Surely, no — yet I have shewn that *St. Chrysostom* makes particular Mention of this Miracle.

As to *Dr. Waterland's* particular Mention of *Paulinus*, it is a very unfair Conclusion that he omitted the Mention of *Chrysostom, Basil, Jerom, Austin* and *Athanasius*, because he thought not the Authority of any one of them sufficient to ground the Belief of a Miracle upon. He might have many Reasons for a particular Mention of *Paulinus*, though he disregarded not the Authority of any of the others. But suppose that *Dr. Waterland* could be proved to have thought their Authority of no Consequence, the main Question remains in Dispute, Whether he thought *rightly* in this Respect. In short, the Anonymous Author appears to have added this Observation by the bye, merely to indulge a Dislike to *Dr. Waterland*.

However, he now proceeds in a dogmatical Strain.

† “ *I take it to be a Maxim on which we may safely depend, that wherever the Bishops, the Clergy, and the principal Champions of the Christian Cause, are found to be tampering with*

* *Introduct. Disc. p. 27.*

† *P. 30.*

*“ false Miracles, and establishing new Rites and Doctrines by
 “ Lies and Forgeries, it would be in Vain for us to look for any
 “ true Miracles in that Church. And this was actually the Case
 “ of the Fourth Century.”*

But this Maxim, as safe as our Anonymous Doctor imagines it, cannot be allowed without great Distinctions.

By *tampering with false Miracles* may be meant, *delivering merely false Miracles, or delivering them when known to be such*: Again; by *Lies and Forgeries* may be meant *such as are not known to the Persons who establish new Rites by them, or such as are known to these Persons.*

When the Words are understood in the latter Sense, it is true that one cannot with much Probability expect to find real Miracles where false ones are counterfeited by the principal Champions of the Church; because a Confidence of Truth naturally makes Men despise the Assistance of Falshood:— And if there were real Miracles in a Church, they must be supposed to be known to the principal Champions of it. But then, if the Words be taken in this Sense in which the *Maxim* is true, they are *not true with* regard to the Fathers of the Fourth Century. For it has evidently appeared, that though some of them record some Miracles which seem improbable, and unhappily apply them sometimes to confirm new Rites; yet it does not appear, with the smallest Degree of Probability, that *any one* of these Fathers did in *any one* Instance deliver an Account of a Miracle as real, knowing it to be false.

And upon this one Fallacy is the whole Argument of the Anonymous Writer raised: So that the Reader already has discovered the Vanity of the main Ground-work, *viz.* * *“ The pretended Miracles of the Fourth Century were not only in ge-*

* *Introduct. Disc. p. 29.*

“ neral and for the greatest Part, but intirely and universally
 “ the Effects of Fraud and Imposture.”

Before we proceed to the Examination of the Anonymous Doctor's building on this false Ground, I must mention one particular Miracle of which St. *Austin* declares himself a Witness, and to the Truth of which no reasonable Objection can be made. But the Design of my particular Mention is to shew, that it seems to have been performed for a very important End by God Almighty; which End may convince us, that miraculous Powers might last in the Church much longer than is usually imagined.

I shall here give the Substance of St. *Austin's* Account, which may be seen more at large in the Margin.

The * good Father lived in the House with a Person who was tormented by a *Fistula*, and who had suffered excessive Torment by the Incisions which the Chirurgeons had made —

* Venientes de Transmarinis me & fratrem meum Alipium nondum quidem Clericos sed jam Deo servientes ut erat cum totâ domo suâ religiosissimus [in-nocentius Carthaginensis] ipse susceperat, & apud eum tunc habitabamus. Curabatur à medicis propter fistulas quas innumerosas atque perplexas habuit in posteriore atque imâ corporis parte.—Placuit ut—sinum illum ferro, qui jam consensu omnium aliter insanabilis putabatur, aperirent. Tantus—eum metus ex prioribus invaserat pœnis, ut se inter medicorum manus non dubitaret esse moriturum. — Nobis ex more genua figentibus, atque incumbentibus terræ, ille se ita projecit, tanquam fuisset aliquo impellente graviter prostratus, & cœpit orare. Quibus modis, quo motu, quo affectu animi, quo fluvio lachrymarum, quibus gemitibus atque singultibus succutientibus omnia membra ejus, & pænè intercludentibus spiritum, quis ullis explicet verbis? Utrùm orarent alii, nec in hæc eorum averteretur intentio, nesciebam. Ego tamen prorsus orare nil poteram— Illuxit dies qui metuebatur—Inspicit medicus, & secandum illum sinum armatus atque intentus inquirat. Scrutatur oculis, digitisque contrectat. Tentat denique omnibus modis, invenit firmissimam cicatricem. Jam illa lætitia & laus atque gratiarum actio, &c. De Civ. Dei, L. XXII, c. 8.

However,

However, it was agreed that this remaining *Fistula* could not be cured without another Incision. Hereupon, *Innocentius* the Patient, who knew by Experience the excessive Pain, address'd himself in Prayer to God, in so fervent a Manner, that St. *Austin* was too much astonish'd to be able to join with him. The next Morning the Chirurgeons came — and found the *Fistula* perfectly cured by Miracle.

Now the important End which seems to have been propos'd by God in this Miracle, was to convince Men in that Age, when Devotion was begun to be transferred from God the Creator, to his Creatures the Martyrs, &c. that they might expect all Blessings by a direct Application to the Deity. Certainly it must be allowed that this End was intirely worthy God; and it hence appears, that the Corruptions introduced into a Church are so far from being good Arguments, that God will not continue a miraculous Power in it, that they may often become the *very Occasions* of exerting a miraculous Power. So that our Anonymous Writer is so far from gaining Ground for himself to build upon, that he obtains it for his Adversary.

Yet he says, "*We have now therefore gained some Footing — and Ground to stand upon;*" and sadly deceives himself.

The former Inference which our Anonymous deduces from his main Position is, that all the pretended Miracles in the Ages succeeding the Fourth, are mere Forgery and Imposture.

* "*Because* (adds he) *the Reasons for which they are imagined to have ceased at this particular Period, grow stronger still in every later Age, as the Church was every Day gaining Strength and a firmer Establishment, not only from the Protection of the Magistrate, but from an Authority and Power of its own, independent on the Civil Government.*"

One would imagine that this Anonymous Author had never read Mr. *Warburton's* most valuable Discourse upon the Alliance of Church and State; wherein a Proof, which amounts to a moral Demonstration, is given, that the Church has (abstractedly from her miraculous Power) *no Authority and Power of its own, independent on the Civil Government.*

I say, one would be inclined to think that this Writer has never read that admirable Performance. If he has, surely he should have condescended to take some Notice of the Arguments therein advanced. As to the Reasons why miraculous Powers are supposed to have ceased upon the Establishment of Christianity, it cannot be allowed that any would cease, but such as were exerted to support Confessors and Martyrs under their Torments.

The Reasons for the Exertion of other miraculous Powers continued the same, while any considerable Number of Heathens remained to be converted to Christianity, or any other important End was to be obtained; the Establishment of Christianity no wise superseded these; and therefore the Conclusion of our Anonymous Author is quite unsupported.

† “ *From these Premisses it is evident (says he) that the forged Miracles of the Fourth Century must necessarily TAIN*
 “ *the Credit of all the later Miracles down to the present Age.*
 “ *FOR they depend, as it were, upon each other, as the Parts*
 “ *of one uniform Series or CHAIN, so that where-ever we*
 “ *draw out a LINK, all the rest which hang upon it, must*
 “ *of Course fall to the Ground.*”

I must confess, that I should have wish'd for a little more Argument and less Illustration in this Place. In general,

‡ “ *Similies are like Songs in Love,*
 “ *They much describe, but nothing prove.*”

† Introduct. Disc. p. 35.

‡ Alma, Canto III.

But this Comparison of the Chain neither *proves* nor *describes* to any Purpose. I cannot conceive how a Number of Miracles, related to be done at different Times and Places, on different Occasions, by different Persons and Things, and attested by different Persons of different Characters, Credit, Religion, &c. should be compared to a Chain, out of which if you take one Link, all below it fall. In short, if the Popish Miracles have a Right to be esteemed Links of this imaginary Chain, the Heathen Miracles may also; and then since *in the Series* of Years many of these Heathen Miracles are *above* the Christian ones, if only one Link be pulled away, all the Christian Miracles fall, according to the Principles of our Anonymous Doctor. But in Reality, the Credit of a Miracle is not to be determined by the imaginary Relation which it bears to others *above* or *below* it in the Series of Years; but from the Credit of the Relator, the Circumstances of the Narrative, the End proposed, &c. So that upon the whole, the Notion of *one Link's tainting another in the Chain* of Miracles, is as inconceivable to me, as the *piercing the Vitals of dead Languages* can possibly be to the Anonymous Doctor.

His second Inference is, that the Pretensions to Miracle, in the Ages which intervened between the Days of the Apostles and the Fourth Century, were merely Forgeries.

* “ *First, (says he) when we reflect on that surprising Confidence and Security with which the principal Fathers of this Fourth Age have affirmed as true what they themselves had either forged, or what they knew to be forged; it is natural to suspect that so bold a Defiance of sacred Truth could not be acquired or become general at once, but must have been carried gradually to that Height by Custom and the Exam-*

* Introduct. Dis. p. 36.

“ *ple of former Times, and a long Experience of what the Credulity and Superstition of the Multitude would bear.*”

I have already shewn, that there is not the least Probability that any one of the Fathers of the Fourth Century delivered as true what he had either forged, or knew to be so ; — and therefore our Anonymous Author gives us a mere Rant, when he talks of the *surprising Confidence and Security* with which this was done by the Fathers. 'Tis true, there seem to have been some Forgeries of Miracles in this Age. But then the Security which Christianity enjoyed on one Hand, and the strong and evident Inclinations of the People to believe Miracles on the other, are intirely sufficient to account for some Persons' forging Miracles in this Age, without any Experience of the Success of Forgeries of Miracles in the foregoing. It is extremely easy for a Person of tolerable Capacity to discern, by a very little Converse, whether People are disposed to believe Miracles ; and what Kind of Miracles, as also in what Kind of Dress are most likely to succeed. It has already appeared that the Fathers of the Fourth Century *were credulous* ; and the Vulgar must be supposed *more* so, in Proportion as their Learning *was less*. Men are least of all able to conceal their Regard for the Wonderful ; but the Vulgar are certainly most ready to discover their Love of any Thing strange. So that any Forgeries of Miracles in the Fourth Age, which can be proved probable to have been committed, may reasonably enough be supposed to have been attempted without any Knowledge of the Success of Forgeries in the Province of Miracles, in former Ages. Besides, he must be a dull Forger indeed, very unfit to impose upon the whole Christian World, who does not understand his Trade so well as to begin with some Miracle, which if it has a slighter Appearance of Probability, is however
so

so contrived that it cannot be absolutely proved a Forgery ; and so he may safely try how far the Credulity of the Multitude will bear.—

Besides, it is extremely ridiculous to suppose, that Forgers of any Age determine how far that Age may be imposed upon, by examining how far *other* Ages have been so. He, who would succeed in a Forgery, must examine the Disposition of the Age with which he has to deal. For most surprizing Differences are found in the Faith of Ages *immediately succeeding* each other, within the Confines of the same Nation. Nay, it often happens that the *excessive Credulity* of one Age occasions the *excessive Incredulity* of the next.

Besides, our Anonymous Author supposing that the Forger's Attempts are to be gradual, and that all the Miracles related to have been performed betwixt the Times of the Apostles and the Fourth Century, are Forgeries, must suppose, that these Miracles, as they approach nearer and nearer the Fourth Century, are gradually greater and greater. But surely the Doctor will not maintain, that it is in Fact so.

* “ *Secondly, (adds he) this Suspicion will be strengthened by considering, that this Age, in which Christianity was to be established by the Civil Power, had no real Occasion for Miracles.*”

The Sentiment of our great Poet, which follows, seems very applicable to our Anonymous Doctor.

† “ *To the Jealous, Trifles light as Air*

Are Confirmations strong—as Proofs from Holy Writ —

I may add, more strong : For St. Mark ‡ assures us, that our Lord gave his Apostles miraculous Gifts for *the Conversion* of the *Heathen World*. And consequently it cannot be supposed, that

* Introduct. Disc. p. 36. † *Othello*. ‡ C. XVI.

while any considerable Number of Heathens remained unconverted, as they did after *Constantine* established Christianity, that these necessary Means of Conversion would be withdrawn : Yet the Anonymous Doctor's Suspicions prefer Trifles light as Air to these Proofs from Holy Writ.

He proceeds : — * “ So that it must have been a rash and
 “ dangerous Experiment, to begin to forge Miracles, at a Time
 “ when there was no particular Temptation to it ; if the Use
 “ of such Fictions had not long been tried, and the Benefit of them
 “ approved and recommended by their Ancestors, who wanted
 “ every Help towards supporting themselves under the Pressures
 “ and Persecutions with which the Powers on Earth were af-
 “ flicting them.”

On the contrary, it must be evident to a Person of very moderate Attention, that the *Danger was much less*, and the *Temptations much greater*, after the Establishment of Christianity by the Civil Power, than before.

For, before the Establishment, Christianity had many more Enemies, much more powerful, and much more vigilant, because more powerful ; and the Discovery of one Forgery of a Miracle would have been of fatal Consequence. Since Men are naturally inclined to suspect *all* Miracles of a Church false, where they discover *some* to be so. And therefore the malicious and powerful Enemies of Christianity would have pursued this Discovery as far as possible to the Disadvantage of Christians. On the other Side, after the Establishment, the Enemies of Christianity were much fewer, much less powerful and much less vigilant, as being dispirited. Besides, the Civil Magistrate now considered the Cause of Christianity as his own, and would therefore endeavour to prevent the evil Conse-

* Introd. Disc. p. 36.

quences which would naturally arise to Christianity from the Discovery of a forged Miracle.

As to the Temptations before the Establishment, Christians could hope for no Support from Pretences to Miracle. When they were violently persecuted and grievously tortured, they wanted indeed Support from miraculous Power. But vain Pretences to it would not anywise relieve them. Besides, as Forgers of Miracles could not hope for any Recompence from the Enemies of the Gospel; so neither from profess'd Christians before the Establishment. For when the Fortunes of Christians lay exposed to the next Pagan who discovered them, as they did *almost perpetually* before the Establishment, no Christian would endeavour to amass Wealth; and the discharging the Ministry was only chusing a Place of more distinguished Suffering: So that no Miracles would be forged to confirm gainful Institutions. But Wealth followed the Establishment of our holy Religion; and as it must naturally do, by Degrees a Corruption of Principle and Practice. Pious Frauds were by slow Degrees introduced; and Miracles were forged for the Conversion of Infidels; when the Increase of Profelytes increased the Revenues of Priests, who had best Opportunity of forging Miracles; as well on Account of the Sanction of their Character, as the Management of sacred Places and Things, and the Influence which they gained every Day more and more perfectly over the Consciences of their Flocks. And, in order to make Priests the Tyrants of Mankind, ten Thousand gainful Doctrines and Rites were proposed, and then confirmed by pretended Miracles; till *Rome* had completed the Scheme of her Kingdom of Darkness.

Our Anonymous Writer adds:

* "*Thirdly, if we compare the principal Fathers of the Fourth, with those of the earlier Ages; we shall observe the same Cha-*

* Introd. Disc. p. 37.

acters.

“ *raeters of Zeal and Piety in them all ; but more Learning,
“ more Judgment and less Credulity in the later Fathers.*”

What will not Men say, what will they not do to defend an *Hypothesis* ! It would require a very large and elaborate Volume, perhaps such an one as no *one* Person in this, or any other Age could produce, in order accurately, or even tolerably, to determine the different Degrees of Learning which the Fathers possess'd. However, as our Anonymous Doctor contents himself with a bare Assertion, I will venture to assert, that *Origen*, or *Clemens Alexandrinus*, had as much Learning as any Father of the Fourth Century ; not even *St. Austin* himself excepted, who was, I think, indisputably the most learned of that Age. However, it is evident that *Integrity is not always the Companion of Learning* ; and therefore we should act unfairly, if we supposed the Fathers of the three First Centuries less honest than those of the Fourth, because we supposed them less learned.

As to Judgment, surely it very little becomes the Anonymous Doctor to prefer the Fathers of the Fourth Century to those of the three preceeding, when he has laboured to shew that the abominable Errors of Popery gained Ground *much more* by the Authority of the Fathers of the Fourth Century, than those of the three preceeding.

It is inconceivable to me what plausible Pretence the Anonymous Doctor will alledge in Support of his Assertion, that the Fathers of the Fourth Century were *less credulous* than the preceeding. For it has abundantly appeared in many Instances, that *St. Chrysostom*, *St. Jerom*, *St. Austin*, and *St. Ambrose*, were, in all Probability, too credulous. But the same has not appeared of any of the Elder Fathers except *St. Cyprian* ; and he does not appear more credulous than any of these last mentioned ;

tioned ; perhaps he was much less so *. In the last Place, it must be allowed that their Zeal and Piety are equal ; but how badly does it become this Doctor to talk of the Piety of Fathers, when he supposes that they endeavoured by all possible Means to impose on Mankind !

† “ *Fourthly, (adds our Anonymous Doctor) neither does the Character of the earlier Ages afford any real Cause of Preference, as to point of Integrity above the later.* ”

I may venture to affirm that this Gentleman is the first Christian who has publicly maintained, as far as appears from History, that the first Ages of Christianity were not the purest. Dr. Cave, that judicious and truly learned Inquirer into Antiquity, thought this Point so indisputable among Christians, that in his Preface to his useful Discourse on Primitive Christianity, he assigns this Reason why he was not solicitous to carry his Inquiry much beyond the Third Century. Let us see however what Arguments this Anonymous Doctor can advance to destroy the general Consent of the Christian World. We are

* St. Cyprian's Credulity, in the Instance alledged above, and some others of the same Kind to be found in the same Place, may be excused in a good Measure. He did not suppose that any miraculous Power attended the sacred Elements as such, but that God made them the Instruments of a peculiar Punishment. The Persons whom he supposes to have been thus punished, were those who had fallen in Time of Persecution, and could not, as he shews with great Force of Reason and Oratory, be admitted without Penitence to the Communion, consistently with the Good of the Church. And therefore, although we should suppose that God would not miraculously punish those who boldly contemned Church-Discipline ; yet it was highly excusable in Cyprian, who was so firmly persuaded of the Greatness of the Crime, to believe Accounts of the Punishment : Especially since, in this Instance, the Story could probably be told by none but the Woman herself. And People not credulous most easily believe Accounts which others give of their own Punishments.

† Introduct. Disc. p. 37.

told

told that more Heresies sprang up in these early Ages, than ‡ *in any Period* of Ecclesiastical History. But surely in order to give his Argument the Appearance of Plausibility, he should have said, than in *any equal Period*. Otherwise, 'tis not wonderful that more Heresies should arise in the purer Ages, than in a less Space of Time in those Ages which are less pure. But had the Doctor asserted this, he would have engaged in a more laborious Undertaking than he seems disposed for. However, let us grant that in general there were many Heresies in those three First Centuries; does it thence follow that the Integrity of the Orthodox can be disputed? Should we grant that there were more Heresies in those Ages than in *any equal Space* of Time, yet it no wise follows that the Integrity of the Orthodox, on whose Testimony we receive Miracles, was less than in any other Age? If the Existence of Heresies in any Age was sufficient to destroy the Credit of Miracles supposed to be performed in that Age; then the Miracles of the Apostles must be esteemed Forgeries, because 'tis certain that § many Heresies sprung up even in their Times. Whether this Conclusion may incline the Anonymous Writer to give up the Principles whence it flows, I presume not to determine. But I doubt not that it will incline every Christian Reader to disavow such Principles.

But above all, abominable is the Fallacy of urging *Cyprian's* Account of the Church just before the breaking out of the *Decian* Persecution, *A. D.* 250. as the Character of the Church during the three First Centuries. Himself introduces the Character with these Words: || “ *It's Discipline, as he says, was corrupted, and it's Faith almost lost by the long Ease and Peace which it had then enjoyed for near Forty Years.*”

‡ *Introduct. Disc. p. 37.*

§ The Followers of *Cerinthus*, and *Ebion*, and the *Nicolaites*, are too celebrated to need a particular Mention here. || *Introduct. Disc. p. 39.*

So that according to *Cyprian*, the Corruption of the Church only began about Forty Years before the Persecution broke out ; and it proceeded, doubtless, gradually ; so that probably no considerable Corruption was introduced in a considerable Part of that Time, and the Corruptions which he speaks of are to be confined to a very small Time before the Persecution. And even in that violent Persecution the Church was not so corrupted, but it was able to produce great Numbers of Martyrs and Confessors, not only Men but Women. And yet our ingenious Doctor would palm upon us the Character of the Church during a *small Part of the Third Century*, as the Character of the Church during the *three Centuries*—One must think such Authors worthy to live in the very Times of Corruption which *St. Cyprian* describes.

Our Anonymous now proceeds to observe, that as the Apostolic Writings persuaded some to forge Imitations of them, so would the Apostolic Miracles. But here he argues (as the Schoolmen would say,) from what *may possibly be* when considered *in abstract*, to what *actually is*, when considered *in concrete*. And this is a Method, of which not only a Doctor, but a Fresh-man should be ashamed. He has not attempted to shew that there actually were any Forgeries of this Kind in the three First Ages ; and I have shewn that the Experiment must have been extremely dangerous, and have had no Temptation. Besides, could he have actually proved *many* Forgeries of this Kind, yet he cannot shew hence that *all* Pretences to Miracle in those Ages, were merely Forgeries.

Our Anonymous Writer treads in the same Paths with my former Adversary Mr. *W*. He produces the Testimonies of *Julian*, *Celsus*, &c. in order to prove the great Credulity of the first Ages. But surely he should have proved, by some other

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Means than the bare Assertions of these profess'd Enemies of Christianity, that the first Ages deserved the Character of extremely credulous. But the Vanity of this Argument will more fully appear, by considering the Manner in which these prejudiced and violent Enemies of Christianity bring the Charge of Credulity, and how it is repulsed by the Fathers.

The Sum of the Reproach is, that Christians gave their Disciples this grand Precept, *Do not enquire, but believe*. The Fathers reply, that it is true, *They do not lay open their abstruse Reasoning upon difficult Subjects before the Vulgar; because this would be throwing Pearls before Swine*. But this was so far from being a Proof that their Doctrine would not stand the Test, that it must necessarily be the Method of all prudent Men, who instruct the Generality of Mankind in a Religion or Philosophy, which contains abstruse as well as plain Doctrines. All that can be done in this Case by the most rational Instructor is, to prove by Arguments adapted even to vulgar Understandings, the Truth of the Religion or Philosophy in general, and to advise them to believe particular abstruse Points, which they are not able to examine, on the Foundation of that general Proof. Thus did the Christians prove, by the Goodness of the practical Precepts, and the noble Character of God and his Dispensations contained in Holy Writ; as also from the Goodness and Greatness of the Miracles attending the Preachers of the Gospel; that it was, evidently to vulgar Understandings, a Divine Revelation — and then with regard to abstruse speculative Points, they very properly said, *Do not enquire, but believe* — And *Clemens Alexandrinus* very justly observes, that if the Philosophers * hid mysterious Points from the Generality of Hearers; Christians might be allowed so to do.

* Ἐἰς οἱ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος κατακρύψαντες δόξας, τὰς ἀμαθεῖς ἐκώλυσαν ἐντυγχάνειν τὴν δὲ τῶν ὁντως ὄντων ἀγίαν καὶ μακαρίαν Θεωρίαν ἐ παντὸς μᾶλλον ἐπιτεκρυφθαι συνέφερον. *Stromat.* L. 5. C. 9.

Upon the Whole then it appears, that these Reproaches, which *Julian, Celsus, &c.* cast on Christians as a credulous Company of People, do by no Means prove sufficient to destroy, in any Measure, a rational Man's Belief of the Miracles of the first Ages.

As a Confirmation of his Assertion, that there was no Occasion for Miracles in the fourth Century, our Anonymous Doctor promises to shew, in a larger Work, that the Fathers themselves acknowledged this Point. But since it generally, if not always, is found by Experience, that the Promises which Anonymous Authors give of future Works, to illustrate and confirm the present, are to be understood like the Promises * of the *Phocæans* to return to their native Country ; — since also our Author declares, that he shall not easily be persuaded to defend his Principles ; since in the last Place, I seem to have Reason to hope, that the Principles of the *Introductory Discourse* are fully confuted ; and therefore the future Work must resemble one of those Productions which the Ancients supposed to be generated † by the Wind : — I think it necessary to examine the Declarations of one of the most illustrious Fathers of the fourth Century on this Head ; that we may be enabled to judge how far such Declarations in general can be urged as Supports of the Anonymous Doctor's *Hypothesis*.

St. Chrysostom, in his first Oration on Pentecost, introduces a Person making the following Enquiry :

‡ “ Where is the Holy Spirit now ? For you say what is just
“ with regard to those Times when Miracles were wrought,
“ when the Dead were raised, when all Lepers were healed.

* Hor. Od. 16. L. Epod.

† Georg. III. v. 280.

‡ Παῖ, φησὶν, εἰς πνεῦμα ἅγιον νῦν ; τότε μὲν γὰρ καλῶς λέγεις, ὅτε σημεῖα ἐγίνετο, καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείροντο, καὶ λεπροὶ πάντες ἐκαθαίροντο· νῦν δὲ πόθεν δίδωμεν ὅτι παρέστι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἡμῖν ;

“ But how shall we now shew, that we have the Holy Spirit ? St. *Chrysofom* answers, || “ Fear not : I will now shew, that the “ Holy Spirit dwells among us.” And then he proceeds to shew, that without the Grace of God, *i. e.* the Operation of the Holy Spirit, Men could not repent and be forgiven.

Now from this View a plausible Argument may be drawn to prove, that there were really no miraculous Powers in the Church in the Fourth Century ; at least none with which St. *Chrysofom* and his Audience were acquainted ; and therefore his Declarations about the Reality of Miracles in his Time are not to be regarded ; and since he speaks as fully to the Point as any of the Fathers of that Age, none of their Testimonies are to be regarded.

I answer in the first Place, that it does not appear but this Objector was *merely an imaginary one*, whom St. *Chrysofom* introduced, as almost all Writers do, to give them an Opportunity of saying something by way of Answer in a better Manner than they can otherwise do. And in those Cases it is intirely sufficient if there be something *specious*, though nothing *true*, for the Objection to be grounded upon.

In the next Place, altho’ we should allow every Thing asserted in the Objection to be true, it would not follow that there were no real Miracles in the Fourth Century ; no ; not even that there were no real Miracles known to the Objector. For ’tis only said that in the Apostles’ Time Miracles were wrought, and Instances are given—and then ’tis urged, that in St. *Chrysofom*’s Time, Christians could not argue hence for the Subsistence of the Holy Spirit among them. And it might be allowed, that neither the Dead were raised, nor Lepers healed, and yet other Miracles might be performed in the Fourth Century.

|| Μη δίσσητε ἀποδείκνυμι γὰρ, ὅτι καὶ νῦν πνεῦμα ἅγιόν ἐστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

I only remember one Instance of a dead Man's being raised in this Fourth Century, which is related by any Writer of Credit. And in this Instance St. *Austin* seems to have been too credulous to report. As to the curing Lepers, I remember no Instances in this Century. So if the Objector be supposed real, he might argue plausibly from the Non-existence of some particular Instances of Miracle, so as to form a Doubt about the Subsistence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Again; although the Objector does not say that there were no Miracles wrought in his Age, yet if it be supposed that he implies as much, it by no Means follows that because *one* Person thought so, therefore no Miracles *really* subsisted in that Age; no, nor even in the Compass of Knowledge of St. *Chrysostom's* Flock. And as this Conclusion does not follow from the Objection itself, so neither from the good Father's Answer does it anywise follow. For he does not allow that Miracles had actually ceas'd, he only hastens to give such an Answer as was intirely sufficient, and at the same Time most properly adapted to the Subject on which he was now haranguing. Men do not *always* say every Thing which they justly *can* in Answer to an Objection; especially when they are originally engaged in a Subject of great Importance; in a Discourse on which they are interrupted by an Objection which offers itself and retards the Stream of their Oratory. In such Circumstances Men are content to give such an Answer as obviates any Prejudice it may occasion to the Subject in Hand; they do not stay to search the Objection to the Bottom.—Just as Swimmers are content gently to push off any Wreck which obstructs their Passage; but do not search particularly into its Composition, or drag it ashore.

However, in the Process of this Inquiry St. *Chrysostom* again introduces

introduces an Objector saying, * “ Why are not *Miracles* now wrought ?” It will immediately appear that this *indefinite* Expression was not intended of Miracles *universally* or even *generally*, but of one particular Species. For the good Father immediately says, † “ I beg your Attention ; for I almost perpetually hear this Question ask’d ; Why do not all who are now baptised, speak with Tongues, as in the Apostles Days ?”

Here ’tis evident that the good Father meant by the *indefinite* Expression, *Miracles*, only that *particular* Species, the Gift of Tongues. And therefore we may reasonably conclude, that above it is to be understood only of the particular Species, raising the Dead, and curing Lepers. In Answer to this Objection about the Ceasing of Tongues, St. *Chrysostom* answers, ‡ “ Paul says, *A Sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.* Do you perceive, that God is so far from dishonouring, that he honours us by CONTRACTING the Magnificence of Miracles ?” So that St. *Chrysostom* is so far from asserting, that there were no Miracles in the Fourth Century, that he gives a Reason why the contracting the Number or Species should be no Objection to the Reality of those which remained. As the Numbers of Heathens, to be converted, lessened ; so should the Numbers of Miracles. I will only add, on this Head, that if, contrary to all good Interpretation, St. *Chrysostom* were supposed to have insisted on such Reasons as would prove, that he was sensible, and in Effect acknowledged no Miracles to exist in the Fourth Century ; the *Hypothesis* of

* Τίνος ἔν ἑκέν, φησι, σημεῖα ἢ γίνεσθαι νῦν.

† Ἐλαῦθα μοι μετὰ ἀκριβείας προσέχεις. Παρὰ πολλῶν γὰρ ἀκῶ τῆτο καὶ συνεχῶς καὶ αἰετὶ ζήτουμενον : διὰ τί τότε γλώσσαις ἐλάλουν πάντες οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι, νῦν δὲ οὐκ ἔτι.

‡ Παῦλος φησι, (α) Τὰ σημεῖα ἢ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις. Ὁρᾷτε, ὅτι ἔχει ἀτιμάζοντες ἡμᾶς τὸ Θεῶ, ἀλλὰ τιμωρὸς ἐστὶ τὸ ΣΥΣΤΕΙΛΑΙ τὴν τῶν σημείων ἐπίδειξιν.

(α) 1 Cor. xiv. 22. ’tis not Τὰ σημεῖα, but Ἐἰς σημεῖον.

our Anonymous Author must labour as much as mine. For it is as inconceivable that a Person, who had forged a most particular Account of several Miracles which he supposed himself to have seen, should *forget all* the Pains which he had taken in dressing up that Falshood in the Charms of Eloquence, and publicly delivered to the People; and declare publicly to the People in another Oration, that he must acknowledge there were no Miracles; — as that he should forget a Fact of which he had been an Eye-witness.

I shall now just hint those Reasons which seem to me to make it a moral Impossibility that miraculous Powers should cease in the Church with the Apostles.

First, On Account of the numberless Prejudices which Heathens, who were to be converted to Christianity after the Death of the Apostles, entertained against our holy Religion, the Propagation of it must have ceased after the Death of the Apostles, if miraculous Power had ceased with them.

Secondly, Christians could not have been supported under the Violence of Persecution, but * must have yielded to Torture, and

* *Cyprian*, in that very Treatise where he argues against Indulgence to the Lapsed, says in the Person of one Lapsed: *Me in congressione pugnantem cruciamenta varia & supplicia longa vicerunt.* — C. 11. He immediately answers, *Potest cito proficere ad veniam causa talis.* *Ibid.* He clearly saw, that if God did not miraculously support, Man in such Circumstances must fall. *St. Cyprian* confirms his Opinion by the Example of two celebrated Persons, who having at first fallen before Persecution, at last triumphed as Martyrs. So remarkably does God some Times make his Power appear in Weakness! It deserves very well to be observed that *St. Chrysostom*, (*Orat. 2. in Babyl.*) *Sozomen*, (*L. V. C. 19.*) and *Theodoret*, (*L. III. C. 10.*) declare that *Julian* ordered the Priest of the Temple to be tortured, in order that he might lay the Crime of burning *Apollo's* Temple on the Christians. One would naturally conclude, that as it was the Interest of the Priest to have it believed that the

and the whole Christian Church been dispersed, had miraculous Powers ceased with the Apostles.

Thirdly, The Prophecies of our Lord concerning the Desolation of *Jerusalem*, must have been proved false, had not the repeated Attempt of *Jews* and *Heathens*, to defeat those Prophecies, been miraculously disappointed ; that is, had miraculous Powers ceased with the Apostles.

Fourthly, Persons, converted to Christianity by the Apostles, were endued with miraculous Powers. It is entirely incredible that great Numbers of these should not survive the Apostles. But if they did so, and miraculous Powers ceased with the Apostles, these holy Converts must on a sudden be deprived of the miraculous Powers on the Death of the last surviving Apostle St. *John*. And such a sudden Deprivation must strongly influence the whole World who knew the Fact, to conclude that God had deserted the Christian Church, as he formerly did the Jewish ; especially since no Prophecy of this sudden Deprivation could be produced, together with Reasons which might evince the Reasonableness of depriving the Church of these miraculous Powers on a sudden, consistently with his continuing his Favour to it. Nor could unassisted Reason discover why these

the Christians burnt the Temple, he would not need any Torture to bring him to this Confession ; especially when he knew that such a Confession would be extremely acceptable to the Person who was to torture him. And when we hear that he suffered the most exquisite Tortures, and yet confess'd nothing against the Christians, but on the contrary that the Fire was sent by God, (as *Chrysostom* maintains ;) must we not be obliged to say that here was a supernatural Power which prevented the Confession of the Priest, and baffled the Apostate's Designs in this Instance as much as the foregoing ?

miraculous

miraculous Powers should cease universally in the Church upon the Decease of the last Apostle *.

In the last Place, it is utterly incredible that when the Fathers of the Church, in their Writings from the Death of the Apostles to the Establishment of Christianity, recorded so *many* Miracles and so *circumstantially* as they appear to be ; no *one* of their violent, vigilant and quick-sighted Adversaries, who applied themselves to write exact Discourses against Christianity, should discover *one* of these Miracles to be a Forgery, if they were *all* so — especially since such a Discovery would have been of the greatest Importance to the Cause of Paganism.

And since it is utterly incredible on many Accounts, that miraculous Powers should cease in the Church with the Apostles, I conclude that it is a moral Impossibility ; or a *Contradiction to all those Maxims* by which Men judge of God's moral Con-

* The Arguments which I have above urged, to prove the Absurdity of supposing Miracles to cease at the Death of St. *John*, go on a Supposition that the Death of this Apostle was known to the Church very exactly. But if it was not thus known, the Absurdity of the Supposition must appear still more plainly. For if the Christians could not reconcile the universal Cessation of Miracles in the Church upon the Death of the last Apostle, with a Supposition of God's still presiding over his Church, even when they knew that St. *John*, the last surviving Apostle, died at such a Time and Place, they must be thrown into much greater Confusion in an Attempt to reconcile this universal and immediate Cessation of Miracles, when they knew nothing of St. *John's* Death. And that there was the greatest Uncertainty on the Subject of St. *John's* Death, is most evident. St. *Chrysostom* supposes him to live an Hundred and Twenty Years. Others suppose him only to live an Hundred. Others again suppose that he was translated to Heaven like *Enoch* and *Elias*. Others suppose that he laid down in his Grave as a Bed, and sleeps there as living People do, and that Miracles are performed there. See *Chrysostom Serm. de S. Joann.* Photius Cod. CCXXIX. & St. *Augustine Tract. 124. in Joann.* So that our Anonymous Author should have taken some Pains to inquire into the Aera which he supposes of so much Consequence.

duct with regard to Mankind, and their moral Conduct with respect to each other.

Our Anonymous Author is * not content to conclude his Discourse without an Harangue on the Absurdity of making the Fathers indisputable Expounders of Scripture, or, in other Words, infallible Judges. As though there were any Connexion between these two next Conclusions and the last. *The Scripture is sufficient (with God's Grace) to Salvation; — therefore we need not the Fathers as Guides. The Scripture is clear in all Points necessary; therefore we need not the Fathers as Interpreters — THEREFORE we must not admit the Fathers as proper Witnesses of Matter of Fact, which they affirm upon their own Knowledge, concerning the Means by which God accomplished that important Event, the Conversion of the Heathen World to Christianity.*

But as this Anonymous Author loves not any Argument which seems to attribute Authority to the Fathers, let him try to divest himself of Prejudices, by considering the following Argument, which regards a celebrated Author of the present Age. Suppose I should say, that as Scripture is sufficient to Salvation, and clear in necessary Points; therefore I do not need to admit Dr. Middleton as a Guide or Interpreter of it; Would this Author allow me to conclude, that therefore I ought not to admit Dr. Middleton's Account of the ridiculous Pretences to Miracle in *Italy*, as true? Surely, if this Author would admit the Conclusion, he would hardly find one Person in *England*, who would agree with him. And he will never be able to prove, that this is not actually the same as his Conclusion with regard to the Fathers.

However, St. Cyprian might have expected a milder Treatment than he has found from this Author, on Account of

* Introduct. Disc. p. 43, &c.

a very * remarkable Passage, in which he declares, in as strong Terms as can possibly be conceived, that in Matters of Doctrine and Practice, the Word of God and not the Determinations, the Opinions or Practices of the Fathers are to be regarded.

I shall conclude this Examination by observing, that the Uses which this Anonymous Author pretends may be made of the Fathers, are in Reality none at all.

For in the first Place he supposes that the Fathers are of Use to us in *delivering* and *attesting* the Books of Holy Writ. But if according to the *Hypothesis* of this Anonymous Author, we suppose them such Knaves as to deliver the most important Facts as true, when they either had forged them themselves, or knew them to be so; — What Credit can any rational Man give to their Delivery or Attestation of Holy Writ? And since the Anonymous Author does not pretend but that they were as honest as the Generality of People in the Ages in which they lived; how can any rational Man believe on the Authority of Tradition of Ages which he supposes to have been composed of Knaves and Fools, that the Books which we receive as the Word of God, were in Reality wrote by the inspired Pen-men? However, he uses the most ridiculous Shuffle imaginable, and pretends to take Refuge in the *Notoriety of the Fact*. But how could the Fact, *viz.* that *the Canon of Scripture contains nothing but what was wrote by inspired Persons*, become NOTORIOUS,

* Quòd Christus debeat solus audiri, Pater etiam de cœlo contestatur, dicens: Hic est filius meus dilectissimus in quo bene sensi, ipsum audite. Quare si solus Christus audiendus est, non debemus attendere quid ALIUS ANTE NOS faciendum putaverit, sed quid qui ANTE OMNES est CHRISTUS, prior fecerit. Neque enim HOMINIS CONSUECUDINEM sequi oportet, sed DEI VERITATEM: cùm per Esaiam Prophetam Deus loquatur et dicat, sine causâ autem colunt me, mandata et doctrinas hominum docentes. Et iterum Dominus in Evangelio, &c. Epist. ad Cæcil. de Sacram. §. 11.

unless by the Tradition of those Ages which have pass'd since Christ? And how can these Ages deserve Credit, if they were compos'd of Fools and Knaves?

In the next Place, our Anonymous Doctor pretends that the Fathers may be of Use to us in delivering the Opinions and Practices of the Ages in which they lived. But surely it is all-evident, that if they were wicked enough to represent as true, miraculous Facts which they knew to be false, they might be wicked enough to misrepresent the Opinions and Practices of the Ages in which they lived. Especially since there is often a *greater* and more *immediate* Advantage resulting from the Misrepresentation of the Opinions and Practices of People with whom we live, than in any other Kind of Misrepresentation whatever. And it deserves very well to be remembered and considered, that almost every one of the Fathers were engaged in many Disputes, which were generally managed with great Bitterness. And therefore Persons who would in cool Blood misrepresent miraculous Facts, may reasonably be supposed in many Instances to misrepresent the Opinions and Practices of Men against or in Favour of whom they had conceived strong Prejudices; especially with whom they were engaged in Controversy*.

* It does indeed excite one's Mirth to (a) hear the Anonymous Author reproach the *Tunstalls* and the *Marklands* as Persons who have advanced further in the Paths of *Pyrrho* than any Men in *England*, because they have disputed whether some Pieces ascribed to *Tully* were really genuine; at the same Time when himself is boldly destroying the Authority of all the Fathers. This is pretty much the same Case as though a Man should reproach me with want of Civility, because I maintained that at such a Time a Footman appeared in his Master's Clothes, but yet was discoverable by his awkward Air; and at the same Time the Reproacher should affirm that all the Gentry and Nobility in the Kingdom were Knaves.

(a) See Postscript to Introduct. Disc.

In the last Place, it is pretended that the *very Errors* of the Fathers may be of so much Use as to instruct us that we ought frequently to compare our Faith with the Standard of Scripture. But this is a mere Flourish. For before we can make any Use of the Errors of the Fathers, we must know them. And before we can know them, we must have diligently compared the Opinions of the Fathers with the Declarations of Scripture. But before we can compare these, we must have affixed a Sense to the Texts of Scripture, *i. e.* we must have made our System of Faith out of Scripture. But before we do this, we must be convinced of the Truth of this Maxim, *Scripture is the Standard by which we are to form our Faith, and consequently to which we ought frequently to refer our Faith in order to reduce any Irregularities.* So that upon the Whole, before we can know the Errors of the Fathers, we must be possess'd of that Maxim which the Anonymous Writer supposes us to gain from those Errors. We may therefore very properly compare the last Paragraph of the Anonymous Writer's *Introductory Discourse* to the Painter's celebrated Picture of an Horse *running*,—only turn it as it ought to be, and he is an Horse *tumbling*.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

- Page 5. in the Note, after "Enquiry, &c. p." . read 51.
 — 30. Line last; for "*Domniam*" read "*Domnina*."
 — 32. in the first Line of the Note, after "Introduct. Disc." read "p. 15."
 — 34. Line 23. after "*Cyprian*" dele "also."
 — 58. read the *Greek* interrogatively.
 — 62. Line 13. read "replies" for "answers." And the *Greek* in Notes * and † interrogatively.

A D D E N D A.

In Page 2. among the Editions of the Fathers, add,
Biblioth. Vet. Pat. — — *Paris.* 1624
Clem. Alex. — — *Oxon.* 1715.

In Page 23. Line 16. after the Word Advantage. add,
 The same Reasoning holds good with respect to St. *Athanasius's*
 Life of *Anthony* the Great." —

In Page 28. Line 3. from the Bottom, after the Word received,
 add,

Had St. *Chrysostom* assured us ever so solemnly, that the wild Beasts appointed to devour St. *Ignatius*, or any of the Martyrs of those Ages, were struck miraculously with a reverential Awe of those holy Persons, as in the Case of *Daniel*, our Anonymous Writer would have fallen foul upon the Relator because he was an Orator.—But when the plain, the simple, the Apostolic Father St. *Ignatius* * himself assures us, that from what had happened to others, he expected that he himself might thus miraculously disarm the wild Beasts, a Man must have lost all Sense of Modesty who will not allow the Testimony of St. *John's* Disciple in this Case.

* 'Οναίμην τῶν θηρίων τῶν ἐμοὶ ἡτοιμασμένων ἃ καὶ εὐχομαι σύννομά μοι εὐρεθῆναι· ἃ καὶ κολακέυσω συνόμοις με καταφαγεῖν, ὥς ὥσπερ τινῶν ΔΕΙΛΑΙΝΟΜΕΝΑ ἔχ' ἡψαντο.
 Epist. ad Rom. Biblioth. Vet. Pat. Vol. I.

In Page 31. Line 20. after the Word Power, add,

I must desire the Reader carefully to observe that St. *Chrysostom* in his admirable Panegyric upon St. *Ignatius*, where he attributes *Virtue* to the Tombs of Martyrs, does not expressly mention any Miracles which he knew or had heard to be performed in these Places. He only argues from Analogy, and
builds

builds his Reasoning on such a Fact as cannot be disputed by any Christian, *viz.* * the dead Man's being raised to Life by touching the Bones of *Elias*. If, † says he, such Things as these happened in the old World, when God's Spirit was not poured forth in such abundant Measure on Mankind, may we not at least reasonably expect some Relief even in these Days at the Tomb of such a distinguish'd Martyr as *St. Ignatius*, the Disciple of *St. John*, ordained Bishop of *Antioch* by the holy Hands and discerning Spirits of the whole Choir of Apostles; entrusted with the Charge of twenty Myriads of Souls, in the most perilous Times, when a most skilful Pilot was required to weather out the Storm of Persecution; —and in the last Place, who was peculiarly chose by Providence to be led in the glorious Chains of a Confessor from the *East* to the *West*, the Admiration of all Nations, to be crowned with Martyrdom in that City which was the Mistress of the World?

* Οὐδὲ—τὰ σώματα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ θῆκαι τῶν ἁγίων, πνευματικῆς εἰσι πεπληρωμέναι χάρισι. Ἐι γὰρ ἐπὶ Ἑλισσαίῳ τὸτο συνέβαινε, καὶ θήκης νεκρὸς ἀφάμενοι, τὸ θανάτου τὰ δεσμά διέρρηξε καὶ πρὸς ζωὴν ἰωανῆλθε πάλιν, πολλῷ μᾶλλον νῦν ὅτε θαυμάσιον ἢ χάρις, ὅτε πλείων ἢ τῷ πνεύματι ἐέργεια, εἰ καὶ θήκης μετὰ πίστεως ἀφάμενος πολλὴν ἐκείθεν ἐπισπάσασθαι δύναμι. Orat. in S. Ignat.

† See the whole Oration.

Page 57, after Line 16, from the Top, read the following Note after the Words Apostolic Writings.

The Reader must allow me to observe the great Ignorance which our Anonymous Writer betrays, when he says, in his Comparison of the Fathers of the three first Centuries with those of the Fourth. "There never was any Period of Time, in all Ecclesiastical History, in which — so many spurious Books were forged and published by the Christians, under the Names of Christ and the Apostles, and the Apostolic Writers, as in those primitive Ages, several of which forged Books are frequently cited and applied to the Defence of Christianity, by the most eminent Fathers of the same Ages, as true and genuine Pieces, and of equal Authority with the Scriptures themselves." p. 37,

39. In Support of this palpable Untruth, he refers us to Dr. *Wake's* learned and useful Preliminary Discourse to his Translation of the genuine Writings of Apostolic Persons : In which that candid Enquirer into Antiquity acknowledges that some of the Ancients did cite, as genuine Productions of the Apostles or Apostolic Persons, Pieces which were spurious. But who were these Ancients? Do they come within the three first Centuries? or are they Writers of the Fourth Century? For Anonymous prefers the latter to the former. Truly, they are *Epiphanius*, *Ruffinus*, and the Author of some imperfect Pieces published with St. *Chrysostom's* Works. One would scarcely think, that a Person pretending to the Character of a Scholar, would call these Writers the most eminent Fathers of the three first Centuries, when *Epiphanius*, the only Author of any Sort of Credit among them, flourished in the Fourth Century, and conversed with St. *Jerom*, &c. But an Anonymous Caviller dares do any Thing. N. B. Dr. *Wake* mentions not one single Performance ascribed to our Lord, except the Epistle to *Agbarus*; and this is mentioned by no Writer before *Eusebius*, who is well known to have flourished in the Fourth Century.

